



BLAIR ATHOL

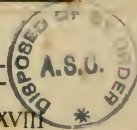


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BLAIR ATHOL.

VOL. II.

BLAIR ATHOL

A Novel

BY "BLINKHOO LIE,"

AUTHOR OF

"THE TALE OF A HORSE," "HIDDEN TALENT," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BLAIR ATHOL.

CHAPTER I.

“Heap on more wood!—the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We’ll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer,
And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again
With all his hospitable train.”—*Scott*.

“Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty night,
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

“Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.”—*Tennyson*.

CHRISTMAS day becomes more dismal and unreal every year. Possibly it may be that we are soured by time, and rendered more matter-of-fact by age, so that we think the day now is not what it used to be ; but there surely is something more in it than that. Who of us is there that cannot and does not look back with regret to the Christmases of his youth, when the day was really merry, and there seemed nothing to darken the horizon ? What man is there now who looks forward to Christmas with pleasure—the impending bills, the indigestible pudding, the compliments of the season, and the feeling that you ought to be happy whether you are or no ?

Where are now the joys of our earlier days, when yule logs, yule cakes, yule candles, frumenty, holly, mistletoe, Christmas boxes, Christmas Eve supper, and Christmas Day dinner, were looked forward to with eagerness for many weeks, and were wept for when they

had gone, and the salutary medicine made its opportune appearance? Nay, even the very “waits” were by us anxiously expected; while now,—but no more of this, only when we think of those days we wish that it may indeed be ourselves and not the times that have changed, so that the younger generation may still experience the pleasures that have gone from us at any rate for ever.

Let us pass by the melancholy theme, and leave Christmas Day at Norton to the imagination of readers. It was much the same as elsewhere in the north of England, where many rites and ceremonies still linger that have been forgotten in the more advanced south. One thing, however, had happened,—Tom, whose constitution was of the very best, having quite shaken off the effects of his adventures, had become communicative as evening drew on, and finally told his whole story to his wondering parents and the girls. Every one laughed

immoderately at the recital, but Mr. Blackburn presently began to look grave, and said the position might turn out more awkward than any one thought, and that far the best thing to do was to write to Miss Whytehead without delay, thanking her for her hospitality, and disclosing delicately the mistake she had made in thinking Tom proposed to her; while a letter should also be sent to her brother Mark, explaining the whole circumstances. This Tom at once said he would do, thanking his father for the advice which all thought was excellent, though Mary Jolliffe, who knew Miss Whytehead, declared she would never let him slip in that easy manner. Tom, however, sat down and wrote as follows:—

“DEAR MISS WHYTEHEAD, .

“I write to offer you my thanks for your kindness in putting me up at your house,

and my apologies for the uncereemonious way in which I left.

“The fact is, I was so utterly taken aback by one event following so quickly on another, and your brother appearing on the top of it all, that I thought you would explain better to him without me, and that it would be well for me to go. I am, however, writing to him to put him right as to the circumstances under which he found me. Has anything been heard of the men ?

“Before concluding I ought to say that I am not quite clear whether you took my light and foolish remarks of the other evening in earnest or not. If you did not it's all right ; but if you did, as on reflection I think must have been the case, I am indeed sorry to have misled you. I can say no more on that subject, only I hope in any case you will forgive me.

“Yours truly,

“T. BLACKBURN.”

By return of post arrived the following :—

“ MY DEAREST TOM,

“ I did feel hurt by your going away as you did, and leaving me with Mark, who said most dreadful things. The only way you can show you are *sorry* is to come and tell me so yourself. Come at once, dear Tom, and I will say no more about it. They have caught the man you knocked out of the window; Mark found him with an arm broken. You and I will have to go to bear witness against him at York. Now do come, my own Tom; I so long to see you.

“ Believe me

“ Yours most affectionately,

“ SUSIE.”

“ P. S.—I should never think any remark of yours ‘light and foolish,’ so let me hear no more of that.”

It is to be feared that Tom’s language on

reading this peculiar epistle was not fit for polite ears; but even old Mr. Blackburn could hardly help joining in the merriment that was caused when it was read out at breakfast.

“Whatever must I do?” anxiously asked Tom, mindful of forced marriages or breach of promise cases with heavy damages.

“Why, you stupid thing,” cried one of his sisters, “write and tell her straight out you don’t mean to have anything to do with her. She knew well enough what you meant last time, else she wouldn’t have put that in the postscript.”

So after a while Tom again put pen to paper and wrote—

“DEAR MISS WHYTEHEAD,

“You have not understood my last. I meant to say that any expressions I may have used which might be construed into a declaration of affection were not intended to have



any such meaning. I must again thank you for your kindness to me; but beg you will understand that I never had, and never shall have, any intentions towards you more deep than those of friendship.

“Yours truly,

“T. BLACKBURN.”

“That ought to settle her,” said Tom, as he fastened up the letter.

“Lucky for you if it does,” laughed Mary. “I don’t for a moment think you will get rid of her so easily.”

“But, Tom,” put in Mrs. Blackburn, “you must have said something to her, poor old thing! She would never write like this if you had not.”

“Oh! be sure there’s more in it than we know of,” added some one else; and among them Tom was badgered into a thoroughly bad temper, until he got out of the house with Henry, who was still wrapped up in the

Christmas card he had received from Kate Hamilton, and excogitating poetry to send to her on New Year's Day.

They walked aimlessly as far as the kennels, looked at the dogs without really taking notice of them ; then back by the stables, where the deaf Thomas as of old held sway, though no longer subject to the sport of being "teased."

The ancient bath-chair, sadly dilapidated, still occupied a corner of the coach-house, and as they passed on into the street, and looked down the hill which had been the scene of their runaway ride in their earlier days, both at once seemed to forget their respective ladies, and commenced talking over for the thousandth time their wonderful adventure upon that memorable occasion. Tom's temper was restored, and Henry was no longer abstracted in poetic thought.

The years rolled back, and they were again the careless happy beings of those very young

days, half inclined to go and try whether Thomas was grown rusty with time, or could still be “drawn” as of yore.

And so a day or two passed by, and it was now New Year’s Eve, nor had any missive arrived from Miss Whytehead; Tom began to feel quite happy again in the assurance that he had put a stop to her advances.

New Year’s Eve at Newton was always well kept. The family, as a matter of course, sat up, no matter how sleepy some might be; and as the night went on, dancing generally would be introduced, for that was a very favourite pastime at the Vicarage, and a very profitable one for our youths, who got an amount of home practice that very few men have the luck to fall in with.

It stands to reason if men are to dance they must learn somewhere; but, as they seldom if ever go in for regular lessons, the result is, they have either to learn at home or in the

ball-room. Hence it is we see so many miserable exhibitions in public.

But in the last hour dancing would cease, and all would sit down round the fire, and talk awhile about the old year; and then Mabel—now some fifteen years old—would produce a wonderful little book she had, in which for years back was written, “Good-bye, old year 18—,” and “Welcome, new year 18—;” and the signatures were there of all who had sat round that fire, or been in the house on the respective occasions. The book had to be signed twice by every one—once before twelve and once after.

Mabel’s book always caused some little merriment, but it was interesting enough for all that, and also productive of a certain amount of solemn thought; for it could not fail to bring home to any one who looked on the same names signed year after year the reflection, “Will there be a break in this next

time, and if not, how long will it be before there is one ? ”

It is not well to look gloomily to the future, and it may be the old Greek, who in fancy stood with his back to it, and saw before him only the picture of the past, was happier, or at any rate more complacent, than we. Still, without meeting troubles half-way, or anticipating ills that may never come, it may be just as well that at a time like New Year's Eve we should call to mind the march of time, and think that we shall not be always as now.

“What matter ?” some will say. “It is the old story of the Egyptian feast, and the mummy taken round before the guests to remind them they are but mortal. There is no need for gloomy thought on that score ; let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.”

Whether any one ever was really actuated

by feelings of this kind it is difficult to say. Certain it is, that many must have assumed such a feeling when the heart was gloomy and apprehensive. Joy and festivity quickly flag before the shadow of impending fate, and few indeed are they who can dismiss the thoughts of the future so entirely as to think only of the present; more especially if the future is brought forcibly home to them as by the Egyptian custom.

But it is certainly not our intention to moralize, or enter into philosophical discussions. It is sufficient to say, that Mabel's book produced a certain amount of reflection in all who signed it; but, it may be safely said, not of that description which the Egyptians are supposed to have experienced.

The signatures were duly made upon this occasion, and then about 11.45 Tom, with Henry and Jack, sallied forth, according to custom, to ring the old year out and the new

one in. It was a bright, clear night, with the snow crisply frozen on the ground, as they crossed the road, lantern in hand, and stepped into the ancient church - yard, where the shadows of the grave-stones formed all sorts of strange shapes in the moonlight, and the old church stood out grey and quiet before them.

Even Jack's chattering was hushed as they walked along to the chancel door, and fitted and turned the ponderous key ; and then the three stepped inside with feelings half of awe, while the single light of the lantern flickered among the grim old monuments of the Falkland family that stood there in remembrance of departed worth, and the sound of the three footsteps on the stones seemed quite unnatural as it reverberated strangely within the building.

Newton church was none of your ordinary country village edifices, but as fine a building

of its size as could be found anywhere. Of considerable dimensions and age, it was especially distinguished by a beautiful octagonal tower, which was almost unique in its design. Inside it was embellished with splendid monuments, to which we have referred ; and those who have seen it at midnight, under such circumstances as we are now relating, will never forget it.

But the three went softly along to where the three bell-ropes were hanging, and placing the lantern in security they addressed themselves to work.

Tom and Henry alone commenced the performance, as the tolling did not require Jack's aid, even if he had been skilful enough to manage the bell with any certainty. So then these two tolled slowly and solemnly for the dying year, anxiously looking for the moment when the buzzing above their heads should tell them the clock was going to

strike. The year seemed to die very hard, and the moments passed very slowly ; but at length it came—that death-rattle of departing time—and the ringers ceased, all listening intently while the clock began to strike; and what were the thoughts of each as each stroke was noted one can speculate upon, but cannot tell. At the eleventh stroke they said, “ Good-bye, old year 186—,” and then, as the twelfth pronounced the end was come, “ Welcome, new year 186—,” and springing again to the bells, all three clashed and jangled them about in the most inartistic fashion doubtless, yet still indicative of hearty greeting to the new-comer.

For ten minutes or more this was continued, till the village was quite aroused, and the ringers were well-nigh exhausted ; then glancing around the church as they walked along the aisle once more, they finally shut the door behind them, and turned to light

and frivolous pursuits—the first of which was a competition as to who could be first at any house to demand admission with the well-known cry of “Luck, luck, luck ; please will you let the lucky bird in?”

It is considered in Yorkshire a most fortunate omen for the individual who can in this matter forestall all others ; and such a one is held to be entitled to much good cheer in recognition of his attention.

Tom and Henry rushed towards the Vicarage, and Jack, seeing he should be outstripped, diverged, and made for the butcher’s house, where a light proclaimed that the family had not retired.

Henry heard a sharp female voice call out, “Stop, Tom, this moment,” but sped on, and became the lucky bird at the Vicarage, where Mr. Blackburn was pouring forth libations of champagne, and sat wreathed in smiles and good-humour.

“Where are the others?” was at once asked.

Henry didn’t know; Tom was with him just now, and some one stopped him.

“Gone to the butcher’s, of course,” said Jessie, with a contemptuous sniff. “I’m sure we ought to feel flattered that even one of you comes here.”

Henry was about to answer when the same voice that had stopped Tom was heard on the lawn outside in shrill tones—

“No, you shall *not* escape me. You have roused my pride, and I will not be *denuded* by you. I’ll bring my brother Mark to you if you won’t give way to me. You don’t know what a man he is when the credit of his family is at stake. Touch him upon his pride and he’ll let you see.”

Then came the voice of Tom, in slightly irritated tones—“But who wants to touch him upon his pride? I’m sure I don’t. Pray now,

Miss Whytehead, be calm, and come into the house."

There was a suppressed exclamation of surprise among the listeners in the house on hearing this name, and several whispers of "hush!" in expectation of what next should come.

Presently the voice broke forth again. "Listen to me, Tom. On my knees I swear that I will not be trifled with. By those stars above, and the moon which shines upon us, you have promised, and you shall perform. The girl heard your promise, and I will see you dead before you break it."

The inmates of the house had now taken up positions at windows or near the door, from whence they could see what was going on, and a strange sight it was that met their eyes. The gaunt figure of Miss Whytehead, with a shawl over her head, kneeling on the grass, with one hand held appealingly to heaven, and

the other pointed menacingly at Tom, who stood before her in evident perplexity.

“Depend upon it,” whispered Jessie to Henry, “it’s the moon ; no doubt she’s mad.”

Tom then broke silence. “Really, Miss Whytehead, it is much better not to talk in this way outside here at this time of night. Do come in ; I’m sure they’ll be glad to see you, and you’ll only catch cold there.”

Miss Whytehead arose and said, “Introduce me as your *affianced* bride, and I will come in, but not unless.”

Tom began to lose temper.

“What *is* the good of talking such nonsense ? Why can’t you be sensible, and come in like an ordinary being ?”

Here Mr. Blackburn thought he had better go out and bring about some settlement.

Walking up to Miss Whytehead he said, “I think I should know you, Miss Whytehead, at least I know your brother very well ; and

you were so kind to Tom the other day that I am sure you will pardon my introducing myself to you without ceremony. I hope you will let us offer you a bed, as it is so late, and you can't possibly get home."

At this Miss Whytehead turned round. "And you are his father? Well, I know you are a just and honourable man. Your son has offered me marriage—my servant heard him—and then he writes to try and get off it. I came straight away here to *affront* him about it, and he is that shameless he won't admit his promise now. Oh! but he sha'n't escape in this way."

"Really, Miss Whytehead," said Mr. Blackburn, "there seems to have been some unfortunate mistake in this matter."

"Oh! you take his side, do you? You'll back him up, will you? you old mean-spirited hypocrite! you *prenavigating* smooth-tongue! I'll let you see! I'll let you see! Enter your

house, indeed ! not I ! Tom, I will *mar* or *marry* you. Take your choice, and let me hear within a week, you snuffling pudding-baker ! ”

With that she tossed her arms on high, and sped out of the gate and down the village, uttering loud threats and imprecations, of a somewhat coarser nature than heretofore, till she was lost to sight ; nor did she remain to memory dear.

Tom and his father stood silent for a moment. At last the former said, “ Well, of all the names I ever was called—a snuffling pudding-baker ! It’s too absurd to be angry at. She must be stark mad.”

“ Indeed she must,” said Mr. Blackburn ; “ and yet she may do much harm. I think you should go and see her brother and explain to him ; he is a sensible man enough, and will put all right. But what about her servant hearing something ? ”

“ Oh, I don’t know,” cried Tom. “ She

may have heard some nonsense, but you may be sure, now you have seen Miss Whytehead, it was nothing serious."

"True," replied the old man. "You can have meant nothing in that quarter, I am convinced; but, after this unpleasant business, the sooner we go in and to bed the better."

But though the old man was now inclined for bed, this was by no means the fancy of the household. First there came the laughter, the chaffing of Tom on his love affair, and the discussion concerning his beloved one.

Matters, however, had become so serious that Tom could not endure to hear it talked about, and some one considerably changed the subject. Dancing was commenced once more, and presently singing of songs with vociferated choruses, such, for instance, as the world-famed "Glory, glory, Hallelujah!" "John Peel," "Here's to the year that's awa'!" &c., &c., ensued, and was continued till voices grew

hoarse or failed altogether; and then came the final performance of "Auld Lang Syne," for which the good father was aroused from his slumbers and his easy-chair in the next room, so that, in spite of his protests, he might stand with the rest around the table, restored to its place for the purpose, one of his feet precariously stationed on a fragile drawing-room chair, the other rakishly poised upon the table, hands crossed, and joining with those on each side of him, the whole circle being posed in similar wise. Then how the last remnants of departing voices sang out the old refrain! The belt of hands rose and fell to the tune more and more as the owners warmed to their work. The exercise became severe as well as the singing, and laughter at last breaking through all restraint, the performance came to an end. The worthy Vicar mopped his brows, the mother sank exhausted in a chair, and there really was nothing left to do except go to bed.

CHAPTER II.

“ I rise with pleasure I assure ye,
With transport to address a jury
Of your known conscientious feeling,
Candour, and honourable dealing.”—*Pleader's Guide.*

•

Not long after the events last chronicled Tom was called upon to depose before magistrates to the events connected with his knocking the man out of the window at Miss Whytehead's. The prisoner, whose arm was in splints, reserved his defence ; and after Miss Whytehead, in an excited manner, had given her evidence, he was committed for trial at York.

The details now got into the papers, and caused great amusement and excitement ; and some gay spirits actually subscribed a sufficient

sum to have the prisoner well defended, just for the sport of seeing Tom and Miss Whytehead subjected to cross-examination. Tom had called on Mr. Mark Whytehead, with whom he had a long interview. That gentleman had sufficient common sense to see how the land lay, and that his sister had made a fool of herself; so he promised Tom to do his best to keep her quiet, "though," added he, "I warn you she is a most uncontrollable individual, and is very likely to give you more trouble."

Tom departed, thanking him, and neither heard nor saw any more of the enamoured virgin until the eventful day when he repaired to York Castle for the trial.

The judges were just arriving, and the gay-liveried trumpeters, standing at a remote corner of the enclosed space before the courts, were hailing the majesty of the law with a fanciful miracle of blasts. Open-mouthed the people were gazing on the splendour of the

sheriff, the august dignity of the coachman, the venerable solemnity of the judges. Solicitors and barrister's clerks were bustling about, mutually in pursuit of each other. Within, barristers and others were in a stir, and all was ready to begin.

Tom very soon encountered friends who had come to see him put through the mill. They informed him that Mr. Quidmore had been retained for the defence ; and Tom shuddered when he heard it, for he knew that gentleman by repute, and felt assured that the cross-examination would be of the most severe, and to others laughable, description. He would have given worlds to escape, but he was in for it now.

Mr. Johnson, a very junior counsel, had by some family influence got the brief for the prosecution, and there was little hope that he would in any way be able to check the vagaries of the defence.

Meanwhile, the grand jury had been charged—a superfluous proceeding, by the way, for they were too full already with their pride of office to have any room left for digesting the admonitions of the judge; and Tom was diligently occupied in keeping out of the way of Miss Whytehead, whom he observed lurking about, evidently in search of some one.

One fortunate thing at least happened—the very first “true bill” that the grand jury found was that against John Jones, and John Jones was the man in whose case Tom was concerned.

The terrible period was at least not to be long deferred; but Tom’s heart beat quick when he heard the Clerk of Arraignment command John Jones to be “put up.” John Jones was accordingly put up into the dock. The jury were sworn, the prisoner was arraigned upon the indictment for burglary, pleaded “not guilty,” and the case began. At least it should have begun, but Mr. Johnson, who was holding

his first brief, lost nerve on rising, and was for a while flushed and speechless. It was almost painful to look at him; and most of his brethren buried their faces in their hands, and laughed in ostrich-like solitude.

At length his voice broke forth: "May it please your lordship—Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the charge, by which the prisoner is charged with—(a long and agonizing pause—Mr. Quidmore whispers "burglary" across the table)—burglary. The facts are these:—The prisoner appears on the—that is to say, Miss Whytehead will say that she, or rather, I should say, that Mr. Blackburn will tell you that he was hunting; and indeed, gentlemen, the facts are so simple that you will have no doubt about convicting the prisoner; but I will call the witnesses before you, and let you judge for yourselves." Mr. Johnson sat down perspiring and confused, bewildered in the pages of his much-studied brief.

MR. QUIDMORE: "I submit, my lud, that my learned friend has opened no case on which the prisoner can be convicted."

HIS LORDSHIP: "I think we should hear the witnesses, Mr. Quidmore."

MR. QUIDMORE: "As your Lordship pleases."

Another pause.

HIS LORDSHIP: "Now, Mr. Johnson."

Mr. Johnson, suddenly remembering he has not called the first witness, and horrified at his error, calls wildly for "Susan Whytehead."

There was an official cry of "silence," chiefly proceeding from the stentorian lungs of a gentleman whose resemblance to the Duke of Cambridge was then, and still is, notorious; and the examination-in-chief began.

Miss Whytehead was actually attired in a closely-fitting riding-habit and tall hat. Why she wore it no one ever knew, for she had not been on a horse for ten years; and certainly it would have been difficult to select a dress less

becoming to her gaunt figure and long lantern jaws.

There was a suppressed titter as she stood in the box and was sworn. Mr. Johnson succeeded in starting her off on her story, and then stood feebly looking on, while she reeled off her remarks, checked only from time to time by the judge, who required time to take his notes.

Her story was substantially what we already know, and when it was finished she turned to go.

“Stay one moment, Miss Whytehead,” said Mr. Quidmore, rising. “I have one or two questions to ask you” (with a look at the jury).

Mr. Quidmore was a bland, yet crafty-looking gentleman of great local repute in the north of Yorkshire, where the average common juror was wont to regard him with reverence and open-mouthed delight. Unctuously he began his questions.

“ You have told us, Miss Whytehead, you saw the prisoner’s face at your window ; can you swear it was the prisoner ? ”

“ Yes, I can.”

“ And at this time you were being strangled or stifled in bed by another man ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ There was no light in the room ? ”

“ None.”

“ Was your window open at the time ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ How do you know ? ”

“ Because I could see, of course ; and besides, I opened it myself before I went to bed.”

“ Was the prisoner’s head already in your room, or was it just coming in ? ”

“ It was just coming in, I think.”

“ And then the prisoner was knocked out of the window ? ”

“ Yes.”

"I believe the man who was holding you left you a moment before this?"

"Yes."

"Who was that man? would you know him again?"

"No; I couldn't see him plainly."

"Where did he come from?"

"How should I know."

"But you surely have some idea. Did he come down the chimney, from under the bed, through the window, or how?"

"I tell you I don't know; I never knew he had come until I felt his hand on my throat."

"Now, Miss Whytehead, will you swear you were not dreaming, and imagined all about this man?"

"Certainly I will; and take care what you're saying; I won't be insulted by any *Bannister* among you. (Laughter.) What's there to laugh at, I'd like to know? Why, I heard Tom kick him out!"

“O—oh!” (with a look at the jury). “So *Tom* kicked him out, did he? Pray who is *Tom*?”

“I mean Mr. Blackburn.”

“Ah! I see. I expect we shall be arriving at the meaning of all this presently. What was *Tom* doing then in your room?”

“He came to rescue me.”

“I am told Mr. Blackburn was in his night-attire; of course, therefore, you looked at him with interest?”

“No, indeed, I never looked at him at all.”
(Laughter.)

“Not when he came into the room?”

“No.”

“Nor when he knocked the prisoner out of the window? You must have looked then?”

“I did not, I tell you.”

“Do you mean to tell the jury, Miss Whytehead, that for anything you saw of *Tom* in his night-robes he might have been

the man who was holding you, and you none the wiser ?”

“ I will swear I never saw him.”

“ But your assailant left you just before the prisoner was knocked down ? ”

“ Yes, he did.”

“ Would you be surprised then to hear, that Tom himself was the man who, as you thought, was attacking you—whereas he had only come to apply a mustard-blister to your sore throat—and that seeing the prisoner looking into the room, he left you and knocked him down ? ”
(Great laughter.)

“ I shall not answer such a question.”

“ Now pray don’t be irritated, Miss Whytehead ; but tell me, is it not a fact that long after this time Tom was found in your room by your brother ? ”

“ The thieves might have—”

“ Will you answer me, yes or no, please ? ”

A pause, and Mr. Johnson, urged on by his

companions, gets up and objects to the question as irrelevant.

HIS LORDSHIP : " I cannot prevent such a question being asked, inasmuch as it goes to the credit of the witness ; but it is for the learned counsel to decide how far this line of cross-examination is judicious."

MR. QUIDMORE : " Then I must ask you to answer me yes or no to that question."

MISS WHYTEHEAD, confusedly : " Yes."

" It is my duty also to ask you, whether you had not drunk a quantity of punch on that night ? "

" Certainly not—not a quantity."

" Well, but what do you call a quantity—five glasses ? "

" I had not drunk five glasses."

" Will you swear you had not had four ? "

" Yes, I will ; I only had three."

" Oh ! you had three, had you ? Then

perhaps you don't remember Tom proposing to you that night?"

"Yes, but I do though; and I'll make *him* remember it too." (Laughter.)

"I've no doubt you will; but tell me, is it not also a fact that your front door was found wide open in the early morning after these events took place?"

"Mark said so."

"Oh! I see you weren't capable of perceiving that of your own knowledge" (a glance at the jury). "Well, I think that will do; I have no more questions to ask you."

On Mr. Johnson rising to re-examine, Miss Whytehead declared she would not answer another word to an impertinent young "Jacky-napes" like him; so he sat mournfully and blushing down, amid the derision of the audience, while the lady stalked wrathfully out of the box.

Then came Tom's turn, and the screw was

put doubly strong on him. After admitting that he had been terribly distraught by Miss Whytehead's insisting on the fact that he had upon that night offered her marriage, he was asked whether he was not drunk at the time.

Tom indignantly repudiated the impeachment. "I never was less drunk in my life," cried he.

"Pray, sir, were you ever more so?"

"Yes; many a time."

"I am sorry to hear it; however, enough of that. Is it not a fact that, being in this maudlin state of intoxication, during which you made this offer of marriage, which you confessedly do not remember, so drunk were you—is it not the fact that you found your way to Miss Whytehead's room, and were yourself the man who took her by the throat?"

"Most certainly not."

“Did you not while thus engaged find that the prisoner was observing you through the window?”

“I tell you I never was thus engaged.”

“We shall see” (a look at the jury).
“And you thereupon knocked the prisoner down?”

“I knocked him down certainly, but not *thereupon*.”

“Well, we won’t quibble over words, if you please. You have told us you struggled with another burglar, conveyed him down-stairs, and turned him out of the house?”

“I did.”

“Do you not know, sir, that if this were true it would have been your duty to hand over the offender to justice?”

Tom was silent.

“Do you not know that you were doing something very like compounding a felony in releasing this man?”

“ I did not think of it then.”

“ I dare say not. I dare say you had not quite time to make your story perfect just then, had you ?”

“ I don’t know what you mean ; it happened as I say.”

“ Well, that is for the jury to decide. I must ask you, whether you were not found in Miss Whytehead’s room by her brother Mark some time after this ?”

“ I believe I was.”

“ Don’t say you *believe* you were ; don’t you *know* you were ?”

“ Yes.”

“ And did you not fly away at once on the wings of love, or something equally fast ?”
(Laughter.)

“ I rode away.”

“ Oh ! like the man in the song, ‘ you loved and you rode away ’ ?” (Great laughter.)

“ There, I have done with you.”

MR. JOHNSON : " You rode away on your hunter, I suppose ? "

" Yes."

" Are you an habitual drunkard ? "

" Certainly not."

" Thank you, that will do."

Tom therefore retired in a high state of indignation, which was much increased when he saw the amused and derisive countenances of many friends in the court. He hoped to derive some benefit, however, from the evidence of Mr. Mark Whytehead ; but that gentleman was only permitted to state what came under his own observation on that particular night, and was promptly stopped when he tried to enter upon the subsequent explanations he had had with Tom. So with some slight supplementary evidence the case came to an end, and Mr. Johnson not venturing again to address the jury, and having utterly failed to set his witnesses right by re-examination,

Mr. Quidmore arose, and submitted to his lordship that there was no case against the prisoner.

Thereupon the judge looked very profound and dubious. "Well," said he, "there certainly appears very little difficulty in this case, but I am always loth to take anything out of the hands of the jury ; still—"

Whereupon the foreman of the jury, fearful of missing the expected treat, broke in, "We should like to hear Mr. Quidmore, my lord."

"Then, gentleman, you shall do so ; and I am glad to see you take such a proper interest in the case."

The jury, in reality, would have been deeply grieved had they missed Mr. Quidmore's speech. They had long since made up their minds as to their verdict ; but they had been looking forward to the speech all the time, as they would to an amusing entertainment.

There was loud proclamation of silence, and he began—

“ May it please your Lordship—Gentlemen of the jury. If ever there was a scandalous case, if ever there was a groundless charge, that case and that charge are now submitted to your consideration. That your verdict will be one of ‘not guilty’ cannot admit of doubt in any event, for I think his lordship will tell you, that unless you are satisfied the prisoner *broke* and *entered* the premises the indictment for burglary cannot be sustained ; and in this case, gentlemen, there can be little doubt that this unfortunate man did neither one nor the other, for you have heard from Miss Whytehead that she herself had opened the window ; while it is also clear that no portion of the man’s body had entered the room at the time when he was so unmercifully and savagely struck to the earth. But, gentlemen, it is not on these technical

grounds that I ask you to acquit this man ; I ask you to do so on the broader principles of natural justice—principles which I feel sure are deeply implanted in your honest hearts. I ask you not merely to say that this man did not technically commit a burglary ; but that he was there with no felonious intention, that he was there with an innocent mind, that instead of being the wrong - doer he is the grossly injured one.

“Gentlemen, I shall ask you to believe that the witness Blackburn has, for his own purposes, been guilty of an utter fabrication when he tells you that there was another man who was assaulting Miss Whytehead, and whom he turned from the house. You would observe, gentlemen, that he had not prepared his story with sufficient care. It might do for poor weak women, but I venture to think will not find credence for a moment with intelligent men like yourselves. You will remember when

I asked him why it was he released the supposed man after overcoming him he was unable to answer me. No, gentlemen, that is a question no man could answer ; and why ? Because it is a thing no man would in reality have done. Put it to yourselves, each one of you : had you captured a miscreant in the act of strangling one of your household, would you have let him go ? Why, gentlemen, to ask you such a question is to insult your common sense.

“ And now to unravel before your eyes the true facts of this case.—Miss Whytehead and Blackburn had been carousing that night : as for her, I prefer to treat her as a weak, foolish woman, though you may have other theories respecting her conduct. In the midst of this revelry Blackburn, who appears all through to have acted as an unprincipled scoundrel, makes her an offer of marriage ; she accepts him ; and then he, changeable and fickle, as

you might expect, repents him of his offer, and tries to evade it. But the servant had heard him make it, and Miss Whytehead holding him to it, I submit to you that he went to bed an angry, desperate man, resolved at all hazards to make the lady release him from his engagement.

“They had drunk long and deep. We have it from Mr. Mark Whytehead, that the glasses and bottles lay strewn about the place, while the front door was actually neglected and left open.

“Gentlemen, I do not wish to attribute to Blackburn purposes more wicked than a lenient view of the case makes manifest. It may be his intentions were darker, his motives more villainous, than I shall suggest to you ; that is between him and his conscience. What I ask you to believe is this—that when the household were at length in repose, Blackburn sought Miss Whytehead’s room with the object of

terrifying her into formally releasing him from his engagement. I shall ask you to believe that the affrighted woman, starting from her first sleep possibly, imagined—as she says—that the intruder was a robber, whereat she shrieked wildly in her alarm. Then it was that Blackburn tried to stifle her cries, and then it was that the unfortunate prisoner, who was passing by, did what any right-spirited man would have done : he heard a woman's shrieks ; he seized a ladder from the stacks hard by, ran with it to the house, and climbed hurriedly to the rescue. Gentlemen, Blackburn saw him at that moment when his face came in view. Fearful of discovery and its consequences, he rushed on the unhappy man and smote him down, regardless whether he lived or died ; then burst from the room in haste and fear—panic-stricken for the moment at this climax of his misdeeds—but quickly devising in his iniquitous mind a plan to

delude the terrified Miss Whytehead. Yes, gentlemen, it was then the idea of the other man first struck him. Terror or modesty had made Miss Whytehead blind. She has told you she *saw* no one but the prisoner; and Blackburn doubtless felt confident she had not recognized him as her assailant. He therefore trumped up this story, which served to deceive her, which served to make her think, poor woman, that he had single-handed fought with and saved her from two ruffians; whereas in very truth, gentlemen, the only ruffian she had had to deal with was Blackburn himself, and the man that saved her was the prisoner at the Bar. I say, gentlemen, and I say it with confidence, that if the prisoner had not looked in at the window we should never have heard anything of this other robber — this evanescent creation of Blackburn's ingenious brain. No, gentlemen, he would have found means to stifle

the woman's cries, and—but why pursue the subject?

“It might have been necessary to dwell at some length on the discreditable fact of the discovery made by Mr. Whytehead, when, on passing the house at early dawn, the open door and strange confused aspect of affairs caused him to enter; and, by the way, gentlemen, what better argument can there be than this to prove that the attention of the prisoner too might well have been arrested in a similar manner, not to mention the shrieks that he heard? I say, gentlemen, it might, did I fear your verdict, have been necessary to hold up powerfully to your opprobrium this weak, silly woman, this designing, wicked man, in the infamous and shameless light which their own confession and the brother's evidence casts on them. But, gentlemen, I feel that I have done enough; and I wish, if possible, to save Miss Whytehead, and draw a veil over her

follies. Certain it is that the events I have suggested to you must have made it a politic move for the crafty Blackburn to feign love, where before he had been cherishing rancorous hate, and therefore—but it is enough, I will not inflict on you a further record of his faults.

“I feel sure, therefore, that, apart from technical grounds, you will at once conclude that the prisoner at the Bar is not only ‘not guilty,’ but”—At this moment the Duke of Cambridge-like official awakes and bellows out, “Take your hat off,” to a forgetful gentleman in the gallery. The learned counsel’s peroration is interrupted, every one laughs, and the judge angrily admonishes the Duke to keep quiet. The Duke, who is unable to comprehend that any one so important as himself can be subject to rebuke, blinks vacuously at his lordship and collapses; while Mr. Quidmore hurriedly concludes,—“Yes, gentlemen, I shall ask you to say that the prisoner is a man who has tried

to do what he conceives to be his duty, and that he has suffered in consequence an unmerited and dastardly outrage."

The learned counsel sat down, red with apparent passion, and the applause in court was with difficulty suppressed. Tom's friends were half dead with laughing, while he was pale with rage. Miss Whytehead had been removed some while before in hysterics, and even the judge had kept his hand before his face to hide a frequent smile. The jury looked delighted with the entertainment, and quite sorry to hear the quiet, rational tones of the summing up. This was very short. It did little good to Tom, though his lordship did remark that there was a possibility of his tale being quite true, and yet that the prisoner, like himself, was only coming to the rescue. On the legal points of breaking and entering there appeared no evidence whatever on which to convict, &c., &c.

The result was, of course, a unanimous and immediate verdict of "not guilty." The prisoner left the dock without a stain on his character; and Tom left the court in a maze of bewildered wrath.

CHAPTER III.

“Half the Dukes in the kingdom were at the Spring Meeting. Most of the chief ministers of State swelled the crowd, nor was the Opposition unrepresented. Montague stole two or three days from the Treasury, and Orford from the Admiralty. Godolphin was there looking after his horses and his bets, and probably went away a richer man than he came. But racing was only one of the many amusements of that festive season.”—*Macaulay*, iv. xxiii.

ONCE more we find Mr. Leroy and Jamieson in the parlour of Malton, and they are in earnest conversation. Jamieson seems restless and dissatisfied.

“Well, sir,” says he, “I don’t like deceiving my employers in this way.”

“Nonsense, Jamieson, it’s nothing ; every one does the same ; besides, it is a matter of necessity. You know you are hard up, and I

have not yet got the company matter I spoke to you about settled; so we must have money, and that speedily."

"Aye, that's certain, Mr. Leroy; but couldn't we let Mr. Jolliffe know as well?"

"Most certainly not; and you know as well as I do what folly it would be. Why, do you think he would keep it dark? He would be only too glad to tell all his friends of the good thing; and then where should we be when we wanted to back it?"

"Yes, yes; no doubt that's so," says Jamieson, wearily. "Well, what is it you say has to be done?"

"Oh, little enough: you have found that this Blair Athol filly is a certainty for the City and Suburban—like putting Bartimæus in with seven stone, whereas he has eight stone five pounds to carry. Mr. Jolliffe must be made to believe that Bartimæus is the better at the

weights; he will tell every one, and while people are backing the horse we can get our money quietly on the filly. We must get the high-minded and upright owner, as the papers call him, to come over and see a trial between the two, which Bartimæus must win; and you must borrow some known good horse for him to beat, the filly finishing last,—that will do the business.”

This remarkable proposal Mr. Leroy enunciated with the most calm and business-like air, as if there were really nothing in it that would in any way encounter a scruple from the most fastidious stickler for morality; and Jamieson, smiling half in glee at the idea of a grand *coup*, agreed to do as he was bid, “Though,” added he, “I wish we could have had the young gentleman with us in it. However, it seems we can’t; and after all, it’ll only be for this time. When I’m once fairly on my legs, as I shall be, I hope, after this race, I’ll be straight

with my employers, at any rate, for the future."

"Yes," moralized Leroy, "it's easy enough to go straight when one doesn't want money."

In the case of a man like Leroy, it may be doubted whether under any circumstances his integrity would have been unquestionable; but with the trainer it was otherwise. He was a man whose heart was good, and whose inclinations were to the right side; but he was infirm of purpose, and apt to succumb to temptation. How many men there are like him in high places, who have never been tempted, and for that reason only have never sinned! Why should a man cheat, swindle, or steal if he has plenty of money? We even call a thief a kleptomaniac if he be rich, so unnatural does his action appear, because unnecessary; and yet it may well be that such a one is doubly guilty—that he is a thief out of downright wickedness, that he

steals not to satisfy his wants, but because his nature is innately bad.

In the same way the rich man gambles, and loves to win other people's money, not because he wants it, but because he likes to get it; while the poor man ventures, half hesitating, his stake for no other reason than that he is anxious beyond endurance to increase his little all.

There are no doubt three classes of men. First: those who will cheat or thief in whatever station they be placed. Secondly: the weak-minded, but well-disposed, who only err if pressed by necessity. These, if rich, are good men; if poor, become bad. Thirdly: the honest men, who, no matter what hardships they undergo, still remain true to their principles. This class is smaller in point of numbers than either of the other two.

Leroy was in class number one, Jamieson was in class number two; but in the eyes of

the law they would have been equally guilty in any offence they might commit.

However, to say no more of that, between the two the above-mentioned pleasant little scheme for emolument was hatched; and Henry was to be, if not the victim, at any rate the decoy duck, that was innocently to victimize others.

Very shortly after this Henry received the following letter.

“SIR,

“I write to inform you that Bartimæus and the Blair Athol filly are getting very fit. If you would wish it, I could gallop them together any time this week, only give me a day's notice before you come over to see them. I'Anson will lend me Salamander, and with him in we can hardly make any mistake. The filly goes well, but I hardly think she will stay the distance so well as Barti-

mæus. The two-year-olds are coming on nicely.

“Your obedient servant,

“JOHN JAMIESON.”

Henry and Tom were overjoyed at the prospect of witnessing this trial, and a telegram was at once despatched to say that they would be over at Malton by the first train next morning; and very sleepless was the night they passed, as may be well imagined.

Henry spent his time in hoping that the filly would prove the better of the two, and that he would win his first race with her, just because she was a Blair Athol; however, the morning would quickly make all things plain.

An early breakfast and a fabricated excuse for their departure having been completed, once more the train took the eager and would-be clever youths to the old training town, so dear to them from its connection with

the sport of past years. Leroy was at the station to meet them. They had not expected to see him, but were only too glad of his company. Henry indeed would have been proud to let all the world and his wife see *his* horses tried. Tom was rather more discreet ; but then, of course, Leroy was one of the stable.

Very soon they arrived at Jamieson's, and cheerily greeted him, while he seemed taciturn, though respectful. At length, going straight to business, he said to Henry, "I have been calculating, sir, that Bartimæus should give Salamander 5lbs., to win the race with his weight, and that would make them—Bartimæus 8st. 5lbs., Salamander 8st., and the filly 5st. 7lbs. What do *you* think, sir, and *you*, Mr. Blackburn ?"

Henry and Tom of course opined that it had best be according to Jamieson's ideas.

"Very well, sir ; now I should like you to

see the weighing, so that you may know it's all right."

"Oh, I'm sure there's no occasion for that, Jamieson," cried Henry. "Do you think I wouldn't trust you?"

"Much obliged to you, sir; but I'd rather you were there, so that you may tell your friends you saw it with your own eyes, and then no one can blame me, whatever happens afterwards."

Leroy glanced at Jamieson with a sharp frown; but Henry, who thought nothing of what he said, expressed himself quite willing to go at once to the scales. The weighing was duly and scrupulously attended to. The two jockeys who had been engaged to ride Bartimæus and Salamander went with their paraphernalia of saddle, cloths, &c., to their respective mounts, and the small but promising stable-boy who was to have the handling of the Blair Athol filly was hustled along to

where she stood, so that all might be quickly ready.

“Now, Joe,” says the trainer, “you make strong play with Salamander,—break their hearts if you can; and Tom, you had better lie off a couple of lengths with the old horse to the distance; Jack, you keep that filly close at Salamander’s girths until the last fifty yards, and then beat him if you can. If the filly is beat, mind and notice when you first began to feel her give way.” Then to Henry, “I’m afraid she won’t get beyond six furlongs; but we shall see.”

There is no more time for much talking, now. The party take up an advantageous position to witness the finish after the mile and two furlongs had been traversed. The horses canter smartly down to the starting-place—Bartimæus, business-like as of old; Salamander, the winner of the last year’s Cæsar-witch, but now only about half fit to run,

kicking and bucking hilariously as he goes ; and the filly, who is a sweet blood-like chestnut with a blaze face, striding along in grand style.

There was no secrecy about this trial, and many others were there to watch it, for Henry had no idea of doing anything but find out which was his best horse, and then winning the race with it. Such a thing as being forestalled in the market did not enter into his head at all.

And now they are off. It is impossible for the ordinary eye to tell which is leading, as they rapidly approach. Eagerly the various interested persons gaze at them ; half the distance has been traversed, and it is apparent that Salamander is doing his duty well, little Jack, perched, monkey-like, on the filly, sticking close to him, Bartimæus a little behind.

“By Jove,” cries Leroy, “that filly is going

well!" Then in an undertone to Jamieson, "Are you sure it's all right?"

"Of course it is," whispers the trainer; "but she's doing better than I expected."

"The filly's beat!" cries Tom.

And sure enough it is so: up go Jack's hands, and after vainly driving her on for a moment or two, he lets her drop back, and comes cantering soberly on in the rear.

"Ah! I feared it would be so," mutters the trainer; "can't get more than six furlongs comfortably."

Attention is now directed to the others, for they are little more than two hundred yards away, both going well.

"Salamander wins," exclaims Henry in a disappointed tone.

"Not he," cries the trainer; "Tom's going up to him now. Why Bartimæus wins easy." And sure enough old Bartimæus, as soon as he gets his head, canters away from the

pumped out Salamander, and finishes first by six or eight lengths.

“ Well,” says Leroy, “ I congratulate you, Jolliffe ; the City and Suburban is as good as over.”

“ It certainly looks like it,” says Henry in great glee ; “ but I wish it had been the filly.”

The filly trots soberly past them now, and no doubt would have told them, had she been able to speak, how sorely she had been inconvenienced in the race by the bucket of water she had that morning drunk from the kind Mr. Jamieson’s own hand.

The time passed rapidly after this event. Henry had at first thoroughly alarmed the conspirators by wishing to strike the filly out of the race, as she had no chance. They, however, persuaded him to let her remain in, as she would be able to assist Bartimæus.

The day of the race is now very near. All Henry’s friends, and his friends’ friends, and

through them the public generally, are on the old horse. The papers are loud in their praise of Henry's straightforward policy in telling all he himself knew about his chance of winning. Indeed, some of them were so bent on thrusting Bartimæus down the public throat that they might almost have been suspected of working for the ends of certain gentlemen among the book-makers, who were for ever ready to quietly lay against him. It was noticed that now and again 1000 to 10 had been taken about the Blair Athol filly, "an instance," said the same papers, "of the folly which will induce people to bet on impossible chances, just because the odds are long. We have it on Mr. Jolliffe's own authority, that his filly was absolutely distanced in the trial, and yet some deluded person has thrown away £10 on her."

Now, it need scarcely be mentioned that Mr. Leroy had not contented himself with

backing the filly, but was also at the bottom of the movement against Bartimæus, so that he stood to win an immense sum. He of course remained utterly behind the scenes in these transactions; and when he did appear before the public, it was to make a few flash bets on Bartimæus with one of his confederate book-makers. Bets like this were cancelled as soon as written down, but the papers always chronicled them, coupled with the interesting news that the gentleman who backed the horse was no other than Mr. Leroy, who was well known to be connected with the stable. Then the public, convinced that to back Bartimæus was the most genuine business in the world, came in herds to pile more still upon their favoured candidate, and the same gentlemen who had laid against him from the outset still accommodated them.

Leroy had played his game very well. It is true that there is honour among thieves,

at least when they are united by mutual interest ; and so, though he had several with him in the swim, the secret was never suffered to leak out.

Jamieson was inwardly grieved to find that Henry had backed his horse for fully £1000 ; but he succeeded in salving his conscience by telling him he must have £1000 to £10 about the filly, just for form's sake ; and, also added he, " if it's a slow-run race she might do better than we think."

The weight of the public money still kept Bartimæus in his place, for had not Henry backed him, and also advised every one he met to do so ? Moreover, had not the astute Mr. Leroy got his money on ? As a matter of fact he had *not*, all his bets *on* the horse being, as we have seen, mere empty demonstrations ; but the public did not know that, and felt no doubt but that Bartimæus would land the big event for the Malton stable, unlucky though

those connected with it had been for some while back.

It was now only a week before the race, and nothing indicative of a revolution in the betting had occurred. On Friday morning, then, judge the surprise of Tom and Henry to find in the newspaper *Bartimæus* quoted at 10 to 1, taken and offered, and the Blair Athol filly at 100 to 9, taken freely. A great combined movement had been made, so the paper said, in all parts of England simultaneously, and the filly had been backed to win little short of £150,000.

“What does this mean?” gasped Henry.
“Are the people mad?”

Tom simply gazed at the paper. “Look here,” said he, “this is the sort of thing we shall get for telling people what we knew.”

Henry read, “While admitting the cleverness with which this commission has been worked, we cannot say that we admire the

deliberate fashion in which those who knew best pooh-poohed the chance of the filly, and assured us she was not in it with Bartimæus. There can be little doubt that such a statement is not in accordance with facts, and the owner and his advisers have only themselves to blame if a certain amount of ill-feeling has been excited against them."

Henry felt fearfully indignant at first. "But then," thought he, "it will be all right after the race. I'll make them apologize then."

The Vicar, who was really a great authority in all matters of sport, was next consulted upon the situation. The worthy man had seen much of the world in his youth, and he at once declared the solution of the mystery to be that the wily youths had been outwitted by persons whom they thought they could trust, and that the filly would win.

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Henry. "We saw

them fairly tried, and were present at the scales. How can we have been deceived? The filly was dead beat half a mile from home."

"I don't think there could possibly be a mistake," added Tom. "It must be some lunatic that has dreamed she was going to win, and so has backed her."

"Dreamers don't put so much money down as this," replied his father. "Why, the paper says, I see, that men were commissioned in every place where any betting goes on to back the filly at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, for as much as ever they could get on apparently. Many book-makers seem to have laid more than they wished to do against her, thinking that they could easily telegraph to agents elsewhere to take part of the bets off their hands; but they found when they tried this that the agents were also over full against the filly, so that if she wins there will be an

immense sum required by some one. Have you backed the filly, Henry ?”

“I’ve got 1000 to 10 about her.”

“That’s better than nothing. You may take my word for it, she’ll beat your other horse, if she doesn’t win.”

“But if she does every one will believe what the paper says, that I have been telling them lies.”

“That sort of thing you must accept as a necessary consequence of your going on the turf ; you will probably be rather admired for your supposed sharpness.”

“However, it’s no use talking in that way,” interposed Tom ; “the filly has not beaten the old horse yet, and if she ever does it’ll be time to give up believing in anything again. Let’s go to Malton at once and see Jamieson.”

Henry readily agreed ; and leaving the old gentleman, whose face showed something between amusement and pity, they shortly

committed themselves to the train, and in no long time were at Malton.

Walking straight on to Jamieson's, they found that worthy by no means surprised to see them. Indeed, he had felt sure they would come after reading the paper.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "here are nice doings when people take to backing our horses in this way."

"But what does it mean, Jamieson?" asked Henry, somewhat sharply.

"Why, sir, upon my word I can't rightly tell. All I know is, that I gave the horse and the filly a smartish gallop yesterday morning, and she seemed to go much stronger than usual at the finish. John Scott was just coming out, and he stopped by me a moment as my horses came past, and says he to me, 'I tell you what it is, John, you've got a rare good filly there.' There were one or two people standing by, and some of them would

hear him. Beyond that, Mr. Jolliffe, I can't think of anything that can have caused all this business yesterday."

"But are you sure the trial was right?"

"Why there, Mr. Jolliffe, you are as well able to judge as I am; the filly has come on since then, no doubt; but then, you see, she was a very long way behind at that time. She must just take her chance. More unlikely things have happened than her winning."

"Oh! she can't possibly win," cried Henry; "at all events, to keep myself right with the public, and for my own bets too, I shall declare to win with Bartimæus, and she must not win if he can."

"Certainly, sir," rejoined the trainer, who had not expected Henry to think of this. "Nothing can be fairer than that."

After an inspection of the horses the two clever young gentlemen went home as wise as they came; and Jamieson wrote to Leroy as

to arranging with the filly's jockey, that, in case of the race being left to her and Bartimæus, he should win, in spite of Henry's declaration, and allege that he was unable to prevent it.

Henry, in the mean while, had telegraphed a notice to the 'Sportsman,' repeating his statement that Bartimæus beat the filly a long distance in the trial ; and adding, that the bets made about her on Thursday were in no sort or kind of way attributable to him. He had but £10 on her.

The effect of this letter was to make Mr. Leroy chuckle joyfully as he read the paper over his breakfast at Limmer's next morning, for he well knew that the desponding backers of the old horse would come up to the scratch again on reading it, and also that he would get a point or two better odds about the filly. This, in fact, happened, though certain wary ones shook their heads at Henry's letter, and

said he was carrying the game a little too far, laughing the while, and saying he must be a cunning young dog.

Tom and Henry came up on the Monday. How changed in their own estimation from the miserable, inexperienced fledglings of their first visit ! And yet for the practical purposes of their journey they were relatively as incompetent as before.

Compared with a man like Leroy, they were still but children in all pertaining to craft and wisdom. He received them most hospitably. They were to be his guests at Limmer's, and he had invited a select party to meet them, deeming it a good move to let Henry say his say about the horses to those who would not fail to take action on the information.

A very pleasant evening was spent, and great was the speculation as to who could possibly have backed the filly for such a lot of money. The dinner was of the best, and the

guests men whose tastes for horse-racing gave them always a fertile topic of conversation. Before the party broke up Henry had succeeded in convincing them all that Bartimæus was really the one to back ; and, meanwhile, the latest betting had shown the old horse still at the top of the tree, but it was five to one on the field, and there was still heavy metal in the market for the filly, who advanced to 100 to 12. There were several others freely backed—Maelstrom, the winner of last year's Derby, was accounted to have a rare chance with 8st. 10lbs. ; and there was Chanticleer, a bottled-up old one from Wood-yates, almost as good a favourite as anything. Lothario, with 6st. 10lbs., had been freely backed for the Derby : he was the Duke of Beaufort's horse, and John Day was said to be very sanguine about him. Then there was old Blue Skin, about whom the Newmarket folks were confident, but 9st. 2lbs. seemed

almost too much for him, grand horse though he was. And many others were there, but it is needless to mention them. Indeed, as for Henry, he never thought about any horses but his own, not entertaining for an instant the idea that he could be beaten.

The day is now come, and the journey down is this time performed by rail. Very different is the scene on the Downs from that so well remembered when Blair Athol came forth to victory. The holiday throng is absent, there is less of merriment, and those who are present seem more wholly given to the immediate purpose of the meeting.

“What a contrast,” said Henry, as they strolled into the paddock, “should we now present to what we were before! *Then* we were unsophisticated, dishevelled with the night’s adventures, and not to say dirty, from the lack of toilet requisites, anxiously reflecting whether we could manage to eke out the

scant supply of coin we had to admit us to a cheap stand. *Now* we are here owning two favourites for the most important race, and pointed out as objects of interest as we pass along."

"Ah!" rejoined Tom, "but you won't see a Blair Athol win to-day, my boy."

Leroy now, in spite of the solicitude of the youths, to thoroughly and at once inspect every horse in the paddock, introduces them to all manner of noble sportsmen, with whom it is necessary to hold some little converse. He himself goes quietly away to where he sees Jamieson in the distance with his two horses leisurely walking round. Henry, who up to the present is little known, speedily becomes a centre of attraction, and the courtesies of sundry most distinguished personages are positively overpowering. To have got hold of the owner of two hot favourites, and that owner a beardless youth, is indeed a

favourable turn in Fortune's wheel. Tom too is somewhat sought after as soon as it becomes known that he is Henry's friend, and the two reiterate again and again, to all who please to ask, that Bartimæus will not only beat the filly a long way, but is sure to win.

Meanwhile, Leroy has had time to speak to Jamieson. "Well, I have put Jones £1000 to nothing on the filly ; is that enough, do you think ?"

"Oh, yes, sir ; he's a good boy is Jones, there's no fear about him. We tell him to win, and he'll do it if he can. Then supposing the old horse is second, he must declare he couldn't hold the filly. You may rely on him thoroughly, Mr. Leroy ; he considers me in the matter, not Mr. Jolliffe."

"All right, Jamieson ; but do you think it's safe to let the old horse run on his merits ? If anything happened to the filly he might win, and then we should lose both ways."

“Oh, never fear, sir; besides, it's too late now, I've got Fordham to ride him, so he will have to go. The people will back him all the more when they see Fordham up.”

At this moment Henry and Tom came strolling up with some of their new acquaintances, and exchanged a few words with Jamieson, eyed the horses critically, found that all was well, and went on to look at the others. There was the ancient candidate from Wood-yates, very weedy, and fired all round, but nevertheless of varmint appearance, and thoroughly fit. Lothario, a short-legged, lengthy horse, full of muscle, but deficient in bone.

“Hardly the sort for the Derby,” remarked Lord Vavasour de Brooke, who had become particularly friendly with Henry.

This nobleman was only about twenty-seven years old, but had already got himself into most straitened circumstances. He was here,

however, to-day with his drag, and sundry gay youths and lively damsels, to make a final flutter for the gloves.

In finding Henry he thought he had at length turned the corner of luck, and was determined to stick by him and make certain of his views.

Henry himself would fain be with his own horses, but fancies that it may display him as a novice if he takes undue notice of them ; so, much against the grain, he saunters on, passing by Blueskin and Maelstrom with scarce a look, though on any other day these grand animals would have excited his keenest interest. One more walk past Jamieson, and a casual question, " Well, Jamieson, am I to have anything more on ? "

To which Jamieson whispers, so that the anxious ear of Lord Vavasour de Brooke cannot hear him, " Put a bit more on the filly, sir," and then turns hurriedly away.

This sets Henry thinking, and he is less communicative than before ; but his lordship sticks to him like a leech, and it being time for the first race, they journey up the course into the ring, there to invest an odd fiver on a selling plater.

Henry's new friend asks him to come across to his drag ; and just as they are leaving the ring Henry's eye catches sight of Tom Robson, one of the leviathan book-makers of the day. Jamieson's words ring in his head, and he thinks, " Well, I must have £50 on the filly."

" What are you doing for the City and Suburban ?"

" Three to one on the field, sir."

" Why, what are you making favourite ?"

" Filly by Blair Athol."

" Goodness, how's that ?"

" Oh ! there's lots has to back it at any price, to save what they've laid."

“What about Bartimæus?”

“I’ll lay you 7 to 1.”

“Indeed; well, my money’s on him, or else I’d have troubled you.”

“You can put me down seven hundreds, Bartimæus, if you will, Robson,” interposed Lord Vavasour de Brooke.

“Very well, my lord. Now, sir, what shall I do for you?”

“Oh, I’ll take three fifties about the filly, if you can’t lay me any better odds,” said Henry.

“All right, sir; what name?”

“Jolliffe.”

“Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, for not recognizing you; hope your mare will win.”

“Not she; the horse is a lot better, but I wanted to have a bit on her too.”

“Yes, I see, sir.” And then, as Henry turned away, the book-maker whistled audibly, “Well, I do believe that young infant has

regularly planted every one ; and if he hadn't been too greedy, and wanted fifty more on at the last, no one would ever have known that he was going for the mare at all."

"I say, Robson," said the perplexed lord, "I must back this filly, I think."

"Best thing you can do, my lord ; I can lay three fifties once more, and then I stop."

"Put it down then ; wish you could do more."

His lordship, accustomed to the wiles of mankind, had jumped to the conclusion that Henry had all the while been attempting to delude him, and that it was but part of the grand scheme by which the filly had been so largely backed in secret. As a matter of fact, it was ; but Henry was an innocent agent.

Rejoicing then in the luck which had made him stick to Henry to see what he did, while

others had gone away satisfied with the information given them, he went all round, and backed the filly for as much as ever he could get on her ; for he reasoned, that Henry would not have put his money on at 3 to 1 if he were not very confident ; and then, as the first race was over, he found Henry again and took him across to the drag, as they had originally intended.

There, as of old, amid nigger - minstrels, gipsy fortune-tellers, reedy tenors with guitars, singing damsels and harp accompaniments, the carriages were ranged. De Brooke's was excellently placed. The ladies might be a bit noisy, it is true, and somewhat over gaily dressed ; their complexions might be conspicuous with excessive carnation ; their conversation might be hardly suggestive of the shy and modest maidens that the world tries to make itself believe it admires ; but Henry, who was very young, as we know, thought such were

doubtless the manners of those who passed through London seasons, and he favourably contrasted them with the quiet ordinary girls he had left in his country home.

Seated between Miss St. Henry and Miss Lennox—at least those were the names De Brooke gave them—plied with champagne, chaff, food, and flirtation, Henry got on excessively good terms with himself; bet countless gloves against both his horses, and was plunging even in bonnets, when, to his surprise, he found the time had slipped away, and the horses for the City and Suburban were already out on the course, and he not there. For a moment he decided to rush and have a parting word with Jamieson; but the difficulty of getting to him, and the efforts of the ladies to keep him where he was, led him to submit to circumstances and remain. There were his colours—French grey - cerise belt and cap on Bartimæus, and the same on the filly,

except the grey cap to indicate the second string.

But why dwell over the race, and prolong the anxiety of Henry's or any one else's mind? Let it suffice that there is the usual scene of disturbance, the cleared course, and anon the still expectation, broken only by the shouts of "Two to one on the Field," "Bartimæus I want to bet against," &c., &c.

A false start or two, and the twenty-seven runners are off. Hark to the shout proclaiming it!

Chanticleer makes play, trying to cut them down. The start has been but a straggling one, and the filly gets the worst of it. Fordham on Bartimæus is, however, all there.

"There's one of mine out of it, at any rate," cries Henry, and forthwith fixes eager eyes on Bartimæus.

How they thunder round Tottenham corner! This is worse than the Derby, for they reach

the corner sooner, and are therefore more together. Something is down—blue and red sleeves. It's poor old Blue Skin; no worse, we will hope. And now they are fairly in the straight.

“Chanticleer wins!” is the cry, as the old crock comes merrily along. Lothario, Maelsstrom, and Bartimæus are well within hail of him though, and going very strong. This becomes exciting. Nearing the distance, Chanticleer falters and gives way, and Lothario, Maelstrom, something in yellow and black cap, and Bartimæus draw to the front and commence a neck-and-neck struggle home.

Yellow and black, Mr. Merry's Sundial, and Lothario, first one and then the other, lead; Maelstrom and Bartimæus, ridden by older and more experienced men, are trying to keep just one bit in hand for the last. The sight is excruciating to Henry, who shouts and works his hands as if riding, utterly regardless of the

comfort of his companions. Now Fordham is at work in good earnest: the game old horse answers gallantly to his call.

“Bartimæus wins!” yells Henry. “My God! what’s that?”

Yes, there is no doubt of it, it is the filly. She has gradually made up her leeway, and dropped down from the clouds, as it were, at the last, coming with a wet sail, and beating Bartimæus by a neck, Lothario third, half a length off.

Henry is stupefied. “I declared to win with the horse,” he gasps. “People will say I did it on purpose to deceive. What can it mean?—and Jamieson too told me to back her.”

Then scrambling from the drag, he hastens away to the course in time to see his horses led past to weigh, amid an ominous, and what seems to him angry, silence. Leroy is there, pale as death. He rushes across to him.

“What does this mean, Leroy?”

“Most unfortunate, my dear fellow; little Jones couldn’t hold her. I was certain Bartimæus was winning;—but here, it’s no use crying over spilt milk; there’s nothing else to see, let’s be off to town,” and he leads Henry away, amazed and troubled greatly in mind, Leroy himself not yet recovered from the shock he had undergone when he saw the old horse apparently about to win.

CHAPTER IV.

“Go presently enquire, and so will I,
Where money is; and I no question make
To have it.”—*Merchant of Venice*, I. ii.

THE closeness of the finish, together with the oft-repeated fact that Jones had lost all control over the filly, or would have permitted Bartimæus to win, saved Henry's reputation. It was thought that the private trial had been falsely run; and though there was much heart-burning over the vast sum taken from the ring by the mysterious backers of the winner, it could never be satisfactorily brought home to Henry, or any of the stable, for had that been so, reasoned the wiseacres, Bartimæus would never have gone to win as he obviously did. Few took into account the bad start the filly

had got ; and it was concluded on the whole that Jamieson was right when he said that she had thickened and improved since her trial more than he ever saw one, so that she had fairly overtaken the horse, who of course did not improve with time now.

Henry was far from satisfied ; still he had won, and that too with a Blair Athol.

“ Serves me right,” said he, “ for neglecting the old blood ; I ought to have had all the money on her just for that ; perhaps that’s why other people backed her.”

Tom, who was not given to betting, had also got a hint from Jamieson, and put £25 on the filly, not to mention his having actually secured £50 to £25, Bartimæus for a place. This was all he had done, and he was quite pleased with it. Leroy and Henry found him quaffing foaming beakers of horrible champagne at the bar near the entrance of the paddock, and quite hilarious, among companions to

whom he had imparted Jamieson's last tip.

After a little while spent thus—Leroy silent at first, but gradually rising to gaiety—they adjourned to look the horses over once more, directed Jamieson, whose countenance had never changed, to have Bartimæus ready for the Metropolitan, and then went their way to scramble into a train and hasten off to town.

In due course the Metropolitan was run, and won by Mr. Jolliffe's Bartimæus, who started at two to one, and had little difficulty this time. "A most unusual sequence of luck," said the papers; "and the more remarkable when we consider that Mr. Jolliffe is probably the youngest owner of race-horses to be found in England. We hope he may go on as he has begun, and, if we may judge from the popularity he has already acquired, we may venture to prophesy that his successes will be always heartily received by the horse-loving public."

Truly "nothing succeeds like success," and Henry had suddenly become famous. He had also won a not inconsiderable sum of money in stakes, and a little in bets, sufficient to pay all the balance due for Bartimæus.

Leroy, on this being mentioned to him, felt that he could afford now to have a conscience, and refused to have the money. "No, no," said he; "I've made a lot lately, and don't want it. Well, if you insist, you shall put it into this Company, and I can tell you you will do me great good by doing so. Consider that's settled: you are to take £2500 worth of shares in the 'National Ironworks Company, Limited.'"

Leroy now handed over the prospectus of the Company to Henry, and it certainly was a most remarkable production. Sir Irving Allix, Captain Hamilton, and several other good men appeared as directors. Leroy himself was the solicitor. The remunerative nature of the

business, and the exceedingly advantageous arrangement by which the property had been secured for £190,000, were dwelt on at some length. One or two notable engineers had given most satisfactory reports, which were appended, and these gentlemen opined that a large dividend would inevitably be reaped by the shareholders. Indeed, a most dazzling prospect was held out to all who went in for the speculation. The little agreement between Sir Irving Allix and Leroy, by which the former was to hand over £90,000 of the purchase money to the latter and his friends for their trouble in promoting the Company, was nowhere referred to in the prospectus. In all outward show Sir Irving Allix was getting the whole £190,000 for his property, which was very cheap at the money, said the engineers, and of course they were bound to know.

But as to Leroy's friends, it had so happened that an unfortunate speculation had crippled

them, just when they thought to bring out this Company. Leroy himself had been very short, so that the matter had remained in abeyance until now ; but he found himself able at last not only to do what was needful, but to do it without assistance. He therefore without any scruple threw over his friends altogether, and instead of giving way to relaxation after having won a fortune over the race, he set to work at once to float the National Ironworks Company, Limited, entirely on his own account. He got Sir Irving Allix, Captain Hamilton, three of his own clerks, his printer, and finally himself, to sign the memorandum and articles of association of the Company. The clerks and the printer being set down to take one £5 share each, and of course being serviceable only as a species of machinery for arranging the preliminary matters. Leroy then registered the Company.

It may be well to inform the uninitiated,

that the first parties who control and regulate a Company are the seven who sign the memorandum and articles as above. In the absence of express arrangement they are, in fact, the directors of the Company until they themselves choose other directors and retire.

In theory this is all right. Seven men who wish to work together in a business speculation, and to be registered as a Joint Stock Company, have of course on the face of it an excellent right to manage the affairs of the business they have undertaken; but unfortunately *bonâ fides* in these matters are rare. Very seldom indeed are the seven founders of a company the men really interested; or rather, very seldom are any such sevens to be found without obvious dummies among them. It is true that every subscriber to the memorandum and articles must be a shareholder in the company; but then it is easy enough to give

your clerk £5 or £10 to pay for his one share with, and afterwards make him transfer it to you.

Indeed, your printer, your advertising agent, or the future secretary of your company, will readily undertake to procure for you gentlemen who will subscribe their names among the first seven members of any company under the sun.

So then the next step for Leroy was to get the contract, by which Sir Irving Allix had transferred the property for £190,000 to Mr. Lazareff as trustee for the Company, adopted by the Company in proper form. To do this he only needed to summon the seven gentlemen above referred to, of whom Captain Hamilton was the only independent party, and he was much too easy-going to raise any difficulties. Sir Irving Allix, of course, had nothing to say against it; equally, of course, Leroy was satisfied; and as to the clerks and

the printer, they knew that they had nothing to do but to express approval. Therefore the contract was formally adopted by the Company, and the solicitor was instructed to prepare the conveyance in regular course.

The meeting then proceeded to elect the future directors. The printer, having had the list given him by Leroy, proposed that the following gentlemen should be elected:—Sir Irving Allix, Bart., Captain Hamilton, John Akenshaw, Esq., M.P., Lord Vavasour de Brooke, and Admiral Somerset. One of the clerks seconded this resolution, and it was carried *nem. con.* The gentlemen then present at the meeting, having thus decided on their own supersession, retired into modest obscurity, so far as the management of the “National Ironworks Company, Limited,” was for the future concerned, Sir Irving Allix and Captain Hamilton emerging, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the self-dissolved body, and bursting

forth as full-blown directors of the second and genuine board.

The object of all this was to get the agreement adopted by the Company and no questions asked. The new directors might wish now to look at it as a matter of form, but finding it already adopted, would not bother their unbusiness-like heads further about the matter.

These new directors were, however, of course the ones who appeared on the prospectus, and the public fondly believed that they were the men who had prepared and arranged the details of the project which was now offered by them as a remunerative investment.

Those were the halcyon days of promoters. There was little need to advertise this Company. But thirty thousand prospectuses had been sent out, and the advertisement had only appeared one day, when by letter and by hand

the applications came pouring in. Allotments were to be made in the order in which applications were received, and dire was the struggling among obese old ladies, speculative clergymen, and all others who were anxious to derive vast incomes from a small capital, to gain first the door of the office or the counter of the Bank, and thrust their application and cheque into the hands of the officials. There was racing in four-wheelers and hansoms; broughams, dog-carts, and other private conveyances clattered through the city, while Leroy sat and rubbed his hands in glee, for already the applications exceeded the capital, and he knew his £90,000 was made. This was a day or two after he had agreed with Henry that the balance due for Bartimæus should go into the Company, and Henry, being one of the earliest applicants, would of course get the shares.

Next day the rush still continued, and

notices were sent to all the papers that the share list was closed.

The directors met the day after and proceeded to allot the shares, after which in due course it became necessary to return the money to those for whom shares were not forthcoming.

The whole of the shares had been applied for nearly five times over, and so the secretary had a vast quantity of work to get through in sending off "regret notes" to those who had not been fortunate enough to be in time to secure an allotment. Great was the grief among these persons when they found themselves debarred from investing in this wondrous Company, and forced to keep their money in their pockets.

They resolved, however, as soon as ever the Company was quoted on the Stock Exchange to go in and buy shares at any price.

And so the matter rested for the present—Leroy got his £90,000 with very little out-

lay ; Sir Irving Allix received his £100,000, minus a considerable item for conveyancing expenses, &c. ; but then he was also the chairman, and entitled to £500 a-year.

And yet Leroy was not happy. “ Hang it all,” said he, “ if I had only known how this was going I would have got all the shares allotted to myself and my friends. I had plenty of money to pay up the £1 on application and the £1 on allotment, and I would have held all the scrip in my own strong box. Then when the Company was quoted on the Stock Exchange, and all these idiots rushed in and bought, and brookers agreed to sell the shares, they would not be able to get any shares to deliver on settling day, and I should have ‘rigged’ the market in glorious style. I could have made my own terms then. I could certainly have had £200,000, or £300,000.”

“ Well, sir,” said his confidential clerk,

“you have done very well as it is, and have made your money with little trouble.”

“True, Jackson, true ; but it has not been done so artistically as I could have wished.”

Artistically or not, Leroy had cleared, with his bets and with his Company, fully £250,000 in a very short time. The settling over the City and Suburban had been good, and he had netted a huge stake from the victory of the filly and the defeat of Bartimæus combined.

Henry and Tom had gone northward, and he was left to decide upon what course of action now to pursue.

It may be a matter of surprise that Henry had not sought out the Hamiltons when he was in town ; but the reason was, that Leroy, who still cherished his idea of marrying Kate when she was old enough, thought it best to keep Henry out of the way, and with that view told him that she was away at school,

whereas Kate was in reality being put through a course of masters at home, as the wary though comparatively ancient admirer well knew.

Indeed, with regard to Henry, it should have been chronicled earlier that the correspondence he had been carrying on with the object of his affections had been put a stop to some months previously. One of his letters—purporting as usual to be to the brother Jack—had been impounded by Captain Hamilton, and the wary father at once saw how the land lay. In addition to most amorous and romantic prose writing which pervaded the many messages to be given to “your dear sister Kate,” there was also a poem, likewise to be delivered to her, written in the style usual among young gentlemen of Henry’s age, if they are capable of constructing a poem at all. This style may be easily recognized by the inevitable appearance of

the familiar yet pathetic rhymes of "sever" and "for ever," "treasure" and "pleasure," "bliss" and "kiss," with many others which the reader of this is bound to have noticed at some period of his or her existence.

Now, Captain Hamilton, though by no means particular, nor yet insensible to the advantages of an eligible future son-in-law, came nevertheless to the conclusion that this kind of thing was not judicious, and so wrote to Henry,—

"DEAR SIR,

"It is evident from a letter I saw this morning, that you have been making my son the means for expressing your feelings towards my daughter. She is still in the school-room, and anything of the kind does her a great deal of harm. I am quite sure therefore that I have only to ask you to discontinue these proceedings *for the present*, and

you will consent to do so. I shall of course never forget the great service you did us in saving her life; but I cannot permit you to act as you have been doing.

“I shall at all times be glad to see you, and believe me to remain,

“Yours truly,

“CHARLES HAMILTON.”

To which Henry replied,—

“DEAR SIR,

“I have received your letter, and feel that you are quite right in what you say. I have acted thoughtlessly, and should have known better. I need not say that I shall now fulfil your wishes; but at a future time I shall hope to speak to you again on the matter.

“Believe me,

“Yours faithfully,

“H. JOLLIFFE.”

So then the affair had terminated for the present, and as to Henry, after a week of somewhat sore feelings and resolutions to be constant ever, gentle oblivion began to efface the treasured image from his heart; and by the time at which we have now arrived his darling Kate scarcely ever called for a single thought. .

Such is love's young dream, and such the truth of the saying that "absence makes the heart grow fonder!"

Kate herself was by no means one to be disconsolate for long. She had a yearning for a kindred soul, but did not hold with those who thought that there was only one kindred soul in the world for each person. Failing one, she was quite ready to put up with another, and for the present was content to accept Mr. Leroy's attentions with renewed favour; for, in fact, there was a difficulty in securing any one else, as she was more strictly

tended in London than at the sea-side. Leroy, as an old friend, was privileged, however, and even entered the school-room at will. Miss Atkins still presided there, and there was no difficulty about getting her to be discreetly absent, so that the cunning gentleman easily re-established his position, and indeed improved it, as Kate was now older, and given to extravagance in love-making and writing.

It is not altogether clear that Mrs. Hamilton did not see through these little matters; at least it is certain Leroy never suffered any interruption from her. He himself was really incapable of a sincere attachment to any woman; but there was a certain freshness about Kate which attracted him, for it afforded so marked a contrast with the hackneyed charms of his other town acquaintances.

Moreover, a man of his age and knowledge can easily mould the feelings of a young girl to his purpose, whatever that may be.

But with regard to future matrimony, Leroy could not but see, when he calmly reflected on the matter, that unless he looked very carefully after her she would be pretty sure to change her mind in due course, especially when she came out and encountered a host of other admirers.

Partly he felt he must trust to chance, partly to the position he was now establishing ; and, lawyer-like, he had great faith in anything that he could secure in writing. To this end it was that, with the assistance of Miss Atkins, who was very apt for his purpose, and by repeated calls when Captain Hamilton was not at home and Mrs. Hamilton busy, he managed to get free run of the school-room, and—what he thought best of all—to make such way with Kate that she commenced a correspondence with him, and wrote a series of sufficiently foolish letters, which he stored carefully away. Of course she would not be bound by them ;

but he rightly argued that the possession of them at a future date might give him some hold over her.

“One could frighten any woman,” thought he, “by threatening to show such letters as these, supposing she had been fool enough to write them.”

Having gained his object so far, he let the correspondence gradually come to an end, and, lest too much familiarity should breed contempt for him, ceased to frequent the school-room, leaving Kate to grow up under Miss Atkins’ surveillance till the time came for him to claim her as his bride. Let us too leave her and pass over four years.

CHAPTER V.

Οἱ δ' ἄμα
ἵπποις ὁμοκλήσαντες ἡνίας χερσὶν
ἔσεισαν.

Κόνις δ' ἄνω
φορεῖθ' ὅμοῦ δὲ πάντες ἀμμεμιγμένοι
φείδοντο κέντρων οὐδέν, ὥς ὑπερβάλαι
χνόας τις αὐτῶν καὶ φρυάγμαθ' ἱππικά.

Sophocles, 'Electra,' 711.

FOUR years are past. Henry is of age; not that this is a matter of much moment, for he has long been his own master. He is now a member of Balliol College, Oxford, entered there by some strange freak of his tutor at Rugby; and great scandal does it cause the elect of that abode of learning to find an owner of race-horses among them.

In the time which has elapsed Bartimæus has retired to the stud, and is located at Croft,

where he has proved a source of increasing profit. The filly, after a brilliant career, has also taken leave of the turf, and may now be seen—a sedate young matron—leisurely enjoying a well-earned repose in the glebe pastures at Newton, where she and her foal—a rollicking, sturdy gentleman—are a constant object of interest to Mr. Blackburn, who prophesies great things for the youngster.

Henry's horses during all this while have had a steady run of success, and have never again performed in the inexplicable manner which characterized their first essay. Jamieson has grown fat and wealthy, and is thoroughly trustworthy now as trainers go.

As for Henry himself, he has grown stronger in his resolution to stick to Blair Athol, and to back one of his stock, if ever he backs anything at all. His interest in the horse has been declared to be a species of hero-worship amounting to infatuation ; but it has made his love of

racing a very different thing from what it otherwise might have been ; indeed, his ideas on the subject are altogether elevated and refined by this one pervading theme, so that betting becomes a very secondary matter, for it is more pleasure to him to see a Blair Athol win a race on which he has not staked a shilling, than it would be to land a fortune over a scion of some other stock.

Thus it is that, for the present, at any rate, Blair Athol has actually steadied him and kept him straight, when he might, so far as human influence was concerned, have run all over the course, so to speak, and, with his head loose, have plunged into racing in its most dangerous form.

Tom continues to live on at Newton, but goes about a good deal with the horses in Henry's absence, which has at length given him a correct insight into men and things. The world has dealt kindly with him, except

that Miss Whytehead still, when the full moon comes round, is apt to renew her claims on him for marriage ; and, moreover, he has never ceased to be a subject for chaff on the question of the trial at York, and the idea of cross-examination, and the name of Quidmore, are horrid to his mind.

One or two of Tom's sisters are married now ; but Mary Jolliffe still lives at the vicarage, where all goes on as usual.

The scene at present, however, is Oxford : thither, therefore, let us turn.

Who that has been at Oxford—if he be capable of deeming life worth living—has not experienced there happy days, perchance the happiest in his life ? Then all is bright and clear before us—our only troubles impending examinations, which need be no trouble at all ; our only anxiety the probable state of parental feelings when an appeal becomes necessary to the exchequer so as to avert a financial crisis.

Then there is the glad freedom of shaking off the leading-strings of school, and striking out into independent existence, chastened at the same time, and, as it were, spiced by the possibility of danger ever impending from dons, proctors, and others on the look out to punish statute-breakers.

At that time friendships are fresh and hearty ; not exposed to the ungenial influences of contact with the busy world or the world of business ; pleasures are vigorously enjoyed, and there is an amount of “ go ” about everything which cannot be surpassed.

What *séance* of the most learned men was ever so appreciable as a wine-party at Oxford, and of course in all this we mean Cambridge also ? Nay, what dinner-party, where the men are experienced and the vintages hugely choice, ever had such a true ring of enjoyment about it as when fledgeling youths assemble gaily in the rooms of some one of their number after

the plain hall dinner, and sip with appearance of wisdom and gratification such wine as may be forthcoming, while mirth and congenial conversation reign utterly supreme ?

Even sport itself, though to its true lover it never palls, still is brighter and more thorough at this time of life than at any other. Does the man who drives comfortably to the meet in the shires, and finds everything ready to his hand, with his second horse there when wanted, enjoy himself more than, or as much as, he did when he trained off from Oxford to a meet at Thame or elsewhere, unboxed his horse himself, rode it in its clothing up to the hotel, and then at length breakfasted, getting back after the day's sport as best he could ?

However, these reflections have probably passed through many minds besides that of the writer, and it is well to let them go swiftly by lest we grow melancholy, and begin to think on the beautiful words of the song—

“ When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown,
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down,
Creep home and take your rest then—”

No, we must shake off feelings like this ; for true it is, that sport is not, and *cannot* be, stale. So there is life in us yet.

Henry found plenty of friends even at Balliol. Indeed, among those that came up with him were several that were as little suitable for the pursuit of “reading” as he himself was ; and they in consequence soon formed an alliance utterly at variance with the traditions of their sedate college. However, they most of them possessed sufficient ability to defeat the machinations of the examiners with a certain amount of credit, and the college authorities could hardly, therefore, lay hold of them as they wished.

As to Henry, however, the evil day was drawing near. It was Prince Charlie’s year ;

and taking, as he did, an intense interest in that splendid son of Blair Athol, he felt it to be a necessity that he should go to the Derby. He therefore arranged with a friend, that, in case he did not get back that night, his bed and room generally were to be made to look as if some one had slept there and gone out early, so that when the "scout" came in the morning his absence might be thus accounted for; and without more ado he took train and departed for the metropolis early on the morning of yet another Derby day.

It is by no means a difficult matter to go to the Derby from Oxford; less easy is it to get back again on the same day; and even if you do, it is likely enough you will be dropped on to by the wily proctors, who lie in wait for the trains from Town on that evening; so that on the whole, if you can possibly make satisfactory arrangements in college, it is perhaps safer

to stay away during the night and return in peace next day.

Henry of course met Tom, Leroy, and all others of his turf acquaintance when he arrived on the scene of action. He had not seen very much of Leroy during the past few years, that gentleman being now so affluent as to have no need to look to Henry or any one else to support his projects. He had even helped Henry to sell his shares in the National Ironworks Company, Limited, upon an occasion when the tradesmen of Oxford, polypus-like in their absorptive capacities, demanded a more than usual supply of ready money. Henry wrote to Leroy as the most likely person to assist him in this emergency, and the result was, he sold his shares at a handsome premium, and was restored to a most satisfactory financial condition in consequence.

This transaction had of course served to keep alive Henry's feelings of friendship

towards Leroy, and indeed that gentleman could be a very excellent and entertaining friend wherever his own interests were not otherwise concerned. He had now gained his ends so far as money went, and was occupied in making himself a social success. This latter performance is by no means difficult for a rich bachelor with nothing distinctly shady about him, and Leroy got on so well, that he had come to the conclusion that he would be able to aim higher than Kate when he married ; and that, at any rate, he had no occasion to look to her as a ladder by which he was to ascend the scale.

It may be guessed therefore, on the whole, that Henry spent a very genial Derby Day with his friends. He himself had no horses at the meeting, but was intensely interested in Prince Charlie ; only, however, to the extent of having £25 on him, for, grand as he was,—a perfect god among horses,—a roarer

could not win the Derby by anything short of a miracle in the face of Cremorne.

Tom, in a more plain and matter-of-fact fashion, had invested his modest stake on Cremorne; but Henry would never have been guilty of backing anything else when the great Blair Athol chestnut was in the field.

Nor were the public insensible to the character and magnificence of the horse who had never yet known defeat. They backed him with a will, and reasoned with themselves that, though the rule was that a roarer could not win the Derby, yet here, if anywhere or ever, was the exception to prove the rule.

There is a peculiar faculty in certain horses to attract not only admiration, but positive love from those interested in them. And here we do not mean those directly interested so much as the public, or such of them as can appreciate a good animal. Blair Athol and Prince Charlie have both been marked in this

way ; and none who saw it will ever forget the scene at Newmarket when “ Charlie ” won his last race, and lowered the pride of the French champion.

But we must not digress from the day in question. We may look over Prince Charlie in the paddock, and wonder at his colossal proportions as he towers above all his kind. There is the good genial face and the kind eye of Blair Athol ; the same quiet and demure gait, devoid entirely of emotion. On a larger scale, and somewhat more massive than his sire, the son perhaps does not show that wondrous quality which any, even the most inexperienced, eye must always note at first sight as conspicuous in the old horse. Nor does Prince Charlie present—at least to our eye—the same perfection of lengthy sloping shoulders with depth behind them ;—but there, it is idle, nay, presumptuous on our part, to criticize such gems as these : let us leave it to

such turf scribes as think they understand the matter better than we.

But let us not be too much carried away by the inspection of the Prince. There is Cremorne, of a totally different stamp, yet withal a rare specimen of his kind—all wire and whipcord, muscle, and quality; very symmetrical too, save for the way his head is set on to a somewhat plain-looking neck. Take especial notice of this Cremorne, for now, in these later days, as we write about him, we can affirm that he is one of the very best horses that ever was foaled.

The raking, blood-like Queen's Messenger claims attention, about whom the genial-visaged Mat Dawson is much busied. Queen's Messenger is a son of the illustrious Queen Bertha—a mare destined to become still more illustrious as years roll on, and her brilliant daughters Spinaway and Wheel of Fortune come upon the scene.

Let us pass on, however, casting a glance on the sturdy Wenlock as we go, not because on that day we should have thought much of him, but because we are now guided by the light of his subsequent deeds. He carries as yet no record of races won, but he comes of a noble tree—Lord Clifden and Mineral to wit—both sire and dam still on the ascending scale towards the zenith of fame.

Behold too the great outsider, brother to Flurry, by no means so long in the back or so unshapely as some would have us believe, but a Melbourne all over, and full of those strange characteristics that render this family so totally distinct from all others. The horse has without doubt won a great trial, but then he has not been named as yet, and what nameless one can succeed in the Derby? Verily this stable should have learned wisdom from the head defeats of the Bribery colt—thereafter named Savernake—in a past year.

We need not scrutinize the rest, lest we become wearied.

It is Royal Oak day—a propitious circumstance, think the backers of Prince Charlie; while, on the other hand, the opponents hint that the Prince and his followers will anon be “up a tree”: such is their construction of the omen.

After all, however, the day certainly was a fortunate one for Prince Charles, afterwards the Merry Monarch, Charles II.; but then we take it that Prince Charlie’s name was not derived from him, but from the unfortunate Charles Edward of Culloden fame. Still Charles Edward too was of the house of Stuart, and therefore, even for his namesake, Royal Oak day should be favourable.

Once more on the hill to look round the paraphernalia of festivity, just before the horses come out upon the course for the parade. It is all much as usual; but one thing strikes

the ear of Tom and Henry, who are together. There, accompanied by the usual kind of stage Highlander, whose bag-pipes fortunately are at rest, are two somewhat pretty girls, presumed by the confiding public to be "Scotch lassies." Nothing very remarkable about this; but then one of them is singing and the other accompanying her on the harp. It is a sweet old song, and the girl can sing "above a bit," as Tom expresses it.

"Come nearer," said Henry; "I want to hear the words." And so they went nearer just as the song ended; but as the last words were "Prince Charlie," they eagerly demanded an encore in order to make out what it was all about. The girls very gladly commenced again, and the Highlander looked as though visions of unlimited whiskey were arising before him. Here is the first verse of the song:—

“ A wee bird cam’ to our ha’ door,
He warbled sweet and clearly ;
And aye the o’er-come o’ his sang
Was ‘ *Wae’s me for Prince Charlie.*’

“ Oh ! when I heard the bonnie, bonnie bird,
The tears came drappin’ rarely ;
I took my bonnet aff my head,
For weel I lo’ed Prince Charlie.”

“ Oh, stay, stay !” cried Henry, “ no more
of that, if you love me. Rather let me ask
you, as Macbeth did the witches, to—

‘ Say from whence
You owe this strange intelligence ? or why
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting ?—Speak, I charge you.’ ”

The girls, who had stopped the charming
old Jacobite song, were much puzzled, not
knowing whether Henry’s remarks were com-
plimentary or otherwise ; somewhat disposed,
however, to resent the expression “ blasted
heath ” being made use of in their presence.
However, having received half-a-crown, they

thought little more of the matter, but concluded that Henry was drunk or mad.

But Henry, who was now hastening to obtain a view of the horses and the race, felt much depressed by the omen; though of course the song had been specially selected simply because it brought in Prince Charlie's name.

There is no need to dilate much over this Derby. What with the up-and-down nature of the course, the sharp turn at Tottenham corner, and the extra distance, poor "Charlie" goes all to pieces long before the finish. Cremorne looks like winning in a canter, when brother to Flurry bears down on him with a terrible raking stride, now fairly, as it seems, opened out. The difficulty to get this great raw animal round Tottenham corner has almost passed the powers of even Tom Chaloner, and the amount of ground the horse has lost by yawing about all the way up the straight has

been, as one might think, fatal ; but now at last he runs up to his bit, and comes looming on, an awful danger even to Cremorne.

It is a dreadfully exciting finish ; but the unnamed one just fails to get up, and is defeated by a short head. Cremorne has established himself as a Derby winner.

Blame Chaloner if you like for not keeping the second better together, but it seems to us there are few who could have got the horse round the course at all. An utterly raw, uncouth baby, whose merits were only discovered very shortly before this race, he had no experience of racing or nice handling, and those who know what it is to ride such a horse will readily admit that Chaloner showed consummate skill to get him so near the winner as he did. What might have happened had the horse been named before the race, deponent sayeth not.

But what a difference is there between first

and second in the Derby! Cremorne blazes still before the world in proud supremacy. Pell Mell (to give the nameless one his subsequent name) languishes in modest obscurity, and all for a short head!

Queen's Messenger is an indifferent third, and there is Prince Charlie somewhat about sixth. It is a melancholy spectacle as we see him coming back to weigh in—no enthusiastic followers with him now—demure and placid as ever; but the curse has come upon him at last, and even he has proved unequal to the task of combating his infirmity of wind so as to win the Derby.

Well, well, we who live in these days know that many triumphs were in store for "Charlie" to make amends for this defeat, so we do not mind so much; but to Henry it was inexpressibly sad, and he felt much inclined to illustrate the words of the ominous song,—

“ The tears came drappin’ rarely ;
I took my bonnet aff my head,
For weel I lo’ed Prince Charlie.”

However, it was no use, the thing was done and over.

“ Come,” said he to Tom, “ let’s go back to town, I’m sick of this ! ”

Tom had won money, and was, in consequence, by no means down in the mouth ; but he agreed to go, and after meandering gloomily once more over the hill, the two started, but not without having heard the old song ringing out as before where the girls and the Highlander were located, the final words now striking on Henry’s ears—

“ ‘ Oh this is no a land for me ;
I’ll tarry here nae langer.’
A while he hovered on the wing,
Ere he departed fairly ;
But weel I mind the farewell strain—
’Twas ‘ wae’s me for Prince Charlie.’ ”

Henry had now to choose between a return

to Oxford and the orgies of a Derby night in town. His mind was soon made up. He required excitement to renovate him, and so Leroy's invitation to dine at his club was accepted; garments which he had brought with him, and left at the station in case of need, were sent for, and a room taken. The dinner was excellent, Leroy and his friends most entertaining; and Henry's spirits soon reasserted themselves. We may pass by the subsequent visit to the revels at Cremorne—then especially blest in having given the name to a Derby winner—the ever-increasing hilarity, the competition at the various games of chance and skill with which the gardens abounded, the inevitable dispute with the police, and the headache next morning.

Headache or not, Henry had to be off now, at all events; and so in due course he found himself safely landed at Oxford, and conveyed with his bag to college. Arrived there, he

found friends of serious aspect awaiting him, and ascertained the pleasing fact that the authorities had made special enquiry whether he had slept in college the last night, and had come to the conclusion he had not. They had doubtless assumed—knowing his racing proclivities—that he would go to the Derby; and, as he had not been caught by the Proctors coming home, that he must have stayed away all night. Therefore they investigated; and hence a “Common Room” was convened to sit on him at 3 p.m. that day.

“Well,” said Henry, “I suppose there’s no help for it: I shall be sent down. I shouldn’t have minded if I’d seen Prince Charlie win; but as it is it’s rather hard lines,” and he walked up-stairs resignedly to his rooms.

Now it so happened that Henry was in want of a kennelman to look after his dogs in Yorkshire, and had advertised for one in the

previous 'Field.' When he took up the letters he found awaiting him, he was somewhat surprised to read the following :—

“ *West Cottage, Blackheath.* .

“ DEAR JOLLIFFE,

“ You have probably forgotten the small boy to whom you used to give pony rides at Saltoun ; but seeing an advertisement of yours in the 'Field' respecting a kennelman has reminded me of you. I think I know of a man that might suit you, but will enquire further. I am here reading for the army. My people are living at 4, Eaton Square, and I am up there every Sunday.

“ My sister asked me to remember her to you. You would hardly know her, she has improved so much. She was considered the belle of last season. I wonder she hasn't got married ; but somehow she doesn't take to the idea, though she has had any number of

chances. Let me have a line from you when you can spare time ; and believe me,

“ My dear Jolliffe,

“ Yours very truly,

“ JOHN HAMILTON.”

Henry mused considerably over this, especially the last part, and it struck him that there was considerable evidence of Miss Kate's own handiwork therein. Just then he was summoned to the “ Common Room,” where the dons in solemn conclave sat.

The question was soon decided ; he told them at once where he had been, and the decree, admixed with platitudes on the enormity of the crime of going to the Derby, was, that he should be “ sent down ” for the rest of the term—a comparatively mild sentence, as Henry thought, and not altogether unacceptable, for that letter of Jack Hamilton's had made an impression on him, and he thought

sport might come of it if he went up to town for a few weeks ; besides, Ascot would soon be at hand. Moreover, Henry had joined the “Honourable Society of the Inner Temple” a term or two before, and was by way of reading for the Bar ; so that he could now also take an opportunity of eating the prescribed number of dinners at the Temple, and so keeping another term. Not but what leave is always given to go up from the Universities to eat these three dinners when required ; still in this case Henry could show at least a semblance of going to Town for necessity and not for pleasure.

He accordingly wrote to Jack Hamilton how glad he was to have heard from him, many messages to the sister, and that he, Henry, was coming up to town ; would be at Bedford Hotel previous to taking rooms. Then Henry entertained his college friends at a farewell carousal, and departed the next day in excellent spirits.

CHAPTER VI.

“Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him,
And like a bold-faced suitor 'gins to woo him.”

Venus and Adonis.

THE first thing to do in town was to visit a tailor. Youths like Henry, who have been bred up in the country, and never spent any time in London, soon become aware of this, and the eye quickly notes how inferior are the garments made at Oxford or elsewhere, and how utterly ill-shapen when compared with those of the Metropolis.

Henry, though he had seen a lot of sport in its various English forms, was in other respects more or less of a child still, and the idea of a London season was to him a complete novelty.

He entrusted his destinies to Messrs. Hill, Brothers, and was clad by them in a wonderfully short time in gorgeous apparel, such as he had never possessed before. Beale and Inman were extensively patronized, and boot-makers in the Burlington Arcade were eagerly looked up. The result, even in the course of a day or two, was most encouraging, and as the various orders had by no means as yet been all executed, there could be no doubt that externally he would look 100 per cent. better before very long.

Of this he was perfectly conscious as he spatiated in the Park, not without a hope of seeing Kate, but not altogether clear whether or not he would recognize her if he did.

He had his name down for one or two clubs, but had not come up for election yet, so that he was destitute in this respect ; but he soon met a college friend, considerably senior to himself, one Hugh Chambers, who under-

took to get him made a member of the Arlington (then in a state of decline) in a very short time, and also recommended him to come and take a set of rooms in Arlington Street, in the same house where he (Chambers) was living. Henry had been made very comfortable by "mine hostess," the good Mistress Ann Warner of the Bedford Hotel; but he had never intended to stay there long, so he took the rooms off-hand, and located himself in them the next day.

Meanwhile, however, a letter had come from Jack Hamilton, expressing pleasure both on his part and that of his sister that Henry was coming up to town, and saying that he (Jack) generally came home for Sunday, and hoped Henry would call then. If by any chance he was not in, his mother and sister would be glad to see him.

Henry began to feel quite nervous at the idea of seeing Kate once more. In reality it

must be remembered that he had never been introduced to her or to any of her people ; but, nevertheless, he felt that he now must screw his courage to the sticking - place, and go through with the adventure. He had quite lost his old romantic adoration of the lady, but the present business was attractive, as being something out of the common.

The destined Sunday soon came, and with extra elaboration of dress, and a trifle of Dutch courage to inspire him, the gay youth is borne swiftly in a hansom to Eaton Square.

Despite the Dutch courage, he feels a somewhat sinking sensation the while, not unmixed with an inclination of the hands to be tremulous. However, there he is at the house.

“ Is Mr. John Hamilton at home ? ”

“ No, sir,” says the serene servitor who has opened the door.

“ Is Mrs. Hamilton in ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

And up-stairs goes one of the men, followed by Henry, upon whose brow something like a cold perspiration is breaking out.

The door is opened, "Mr. Jolliffe" is announced, and in walks Henry.

Mrs. Hamilton is there, somewhat stouter than of yore, and Kate—at least we conclude with Henry that it is Kate — though we should scarcely have recognized her. She has indeed fulfilled all her early promise, and grown into a beautiful girl—a perfect figure, eyes wonderful, complexion, if genuine, magnificent.

Henry stares stupefied for a moment, but seeing Mrs. Hamilton looking blankly at him he rightly conjectures that she, who knows nothing about the late correspondence, is at a loss to understand who he is. Therefore he walks up to her and says, "You don't recognize me I see, Mrs. Hamilton. Ah, well, no doubt I've changed a good deal in five years,

whereas you have apparently not changed a bit."

Then Kate breaks in, coming forward and taking Henry's hand, "Why, mamma, it's Mr. Jolliffe, who saved me at Saltoun!"

Mrs. Hamilton thereupon greets Henry most cordially, and he is soon at home with the two ladies. The conversation flows rapidly enough, Kate all the time hanging back towards the Saltoun days, so that our "young man from the country" begins to feel as if he had been first favourite without intermission ever since that time. Mamma takes care, however, to intersperse remarks as to the success her daughter has proved, socially speaking. This she does judiciously, not obtrusively, and Henry gathers that many others are, and have been, in the field besides himself, whereof proof positive lies on the table in the shape of a song dedicated to Miss Hamilton, written and composed by an ancient Colonel

of Dragoons in a period of inspiration resulting from love and brandies and soda. The song is entitled "My Empress." The words only serve to amplify the meaning of the title with reference to the adored Kate.

Presently other callers are announced, Prince Piccolo and Count Caramba — the former a dapper little Italian, who may or may not be a great man in his own country; the latter attached to the Spanish Legation, a dark, handsome individual enough, but getting on in age. Henry has already been told about these two: they are both desperately smitten with Kate, and mutually jealous. They are ever on the look out one for the other, which results in their generally coming into her presence together. They keep up a semblance of friendship notwithstanding

The two now look very suspiciously at Henry, and the Italian twirls his long moustache fiercely. Evidently it occurs to both that

they may be like the men who quarrelled and fought for the spoil, while the third quietly walked off with it.

“Ah! Miss Hamilton,” cried the Count, as soon as he and his fellow were settled. “How was it I did not see you at the Duchess ——’s the other night?”

“Because we never got the cards you said you would have sent to us.”

“Gracious! is it possible? I put them in the post myself.”

“Far better acknowledge you forgot all about it, Count Caramba,” said Kate somewhat sharply. “Prince, where were you on the Derby night? I heard of you,” continued she.

Amid the efforts of the Count to exculpate himself—for he really had sent the cards, and only a bad cold had prevented Kate from going—and amid the protestations of the Prince that he had spent the Derby night at

home, Henry was rising to go, when Kate unmistakably signed to him to stay, which he did, nothing loth. Mrs. Hamilton commenced an assault of raillery on the Prince relative to the Derby night, and Count Caramba, being utterly at a loss what next to say to establish his innocence, Kate, taking advantage of the opportunity, said, "There is a peculiar flower out on the verandah, Mr. Jolliffe, I want to ask your opinion about," and forthwith led the delighted Henry outside, away from the sight and hearing of the distinguished foreigners.

Arrived there Kate gave a sigh of relief, and said, "Thank goodness, we are clear of those bores! I am so glad you have come. How strange it is, isn't it? What do you think of me now, eh?"

"Think!" said Henry, "why I don't know what to think. I am quite bewildered."

This was a very safe answer to give, and

may be recommended to others in similar positions.

“ But tell me, do you think I have improved since the Saltoun days ? ”

Henry, now rapidly becoming self-possessed, laughed lightly, “ No, no, I shan’t tell you yet awhile. What fun there used to be at Saltoun ! At least one thought it so then.”

“ And I am sure I should think it so now. I shall never enjoy anything so much as being rescued out of the sea. But then I thought you were going to die afterwards—at least, people said so—and that was very bad ! ”

“ It was bad enough to be ill at all : it prevented me from being introduced to you and your people just at the best time. I wept copiously about it, I can assure you.”

“ Oh, I dare say. Bother ! there’s mamma beckoning for us to come in. Mind you don’t go yet though.”

And so the pair re entered the drawing-

room, whither Mrs. Hamilton had summoned them, as the other gentlemen were about departing. They bowed stiffly to Henry as they went, with the theatrical "we shall meet again" sort of look, and presently they were gone.

All this while tea had been going on more or less, and now there came another male being, in the shape of an inane and hopelessly love-sick curate. He was followed by a reasonable young Englishman named Hilton, who to Henry's mind looked more like business than any of the others; but he seemed a very old friend, and occupied himself chiefly with Mrs. Hamilton.

The curate being regarded as a nonentity, the fair damsel soon drew Henry outside again, and there brought him along in a most rapid fashion—he was to mind and come to their reception on Tuesday. He must also be there to dinner. Cards would be sent him. He

must go with them to Mrs. Moncreif's theatricals, and numerous other places, all of which she could arrange.

Henry began to see that, in addition to the sport of being apparently supreme among the admirers of this very pretty girl, he was also going to secure great advantages in the way of invitations all over the place.

He therefore came very resignedly into the position, which would have been pleasing to any man's self-conceit, and was going ahead in first-rate style, when again they were called in. Captain Hamilton had come back from his walk.

"Oh, papa, this is Mr. Jolliffe; you remember him at Saltoun."

"Of course I do. Very glad to see you, Mr. Jolliffe," said the Captain, speaking, in fact, the truth, for reasons which will hereafter appear.

The fortunes of Captain Hamilton had

evidently been favourable since the Saltoun epoch ; at least so it seemed, from the fine house in which he lived, and the style in which he was doing things. He was soon in deep conversation with Henry, whom he knew of as expert in all matters connected with horses and dogs. His chief difficulty at the moment was to get a roan horse to match three others that he had, and Henry knew of one, which was well. Then there was a wire-haired terrier to inspect and pass judgment upon. The terrier was a very fair one, Henry said, which was also well ; and he finally left about half-past six o'clock, having made, he was convinced, a very big mark.

Thinking over Kate afterwards, and it is certain he thought of her a great deal, he could not but feel that there was something far too fast about her, or what old maiden ladies would term "forward."

"Such a wife as that," reflected he, "would

lead any one a fine life, I'll be bound ; and as for money, she'd spend oceans. I can see that very plainly by the look of things about the place, and the way she appears to go on. No, no, I must have something quieter than that when I marry, if I ever do ; but, nevertheless, that's no reason why I should draw back from all this sport. It isn't as if I had sought her out, and deliberately won her affections, as the novels say. She's done it all herself, so I can't be blamed."

Now of course this reasoning was not strictly just ; but, nevertheless, it is what would have prevailed in the minds of most of us had we been in Henry's place, unless, indeed, we had weakly mistrusted our own powers of resistance, feared to be married whether we would or no, and therefore fled the temptation.

Leroy, meanwhile, was soaring higher than Kate, had in fact given up all idea of her, and was aspiring to marry into some titled

family. Henry saw little of him, for he rapidly became so involved in the vortex of the season and this affair with Kate that he had little time to think of anything else.

He went in due course on the Tuesday to dinner, which was a very grand business. Kate was kindly allotted to him to take in, and this he regarded as a most marked distinction, considering that there were one or two titled personages, besides foreign Counts, who evidently were hugely desirous of that honour. The mild curate was there, and so was Hilton, with whom Henry soon made friends. Jack Hamilton had also at length appeared in the flesh from Blackheath, a wild, good-looking little youth, and a source of constant anxiety to his father, inasmuch as he was reported to be utterly incompetent to pass his examination for the army.

The reception, like all such affairs, was sufficiently slow. Singers engaged at large

expense performed, Kate also sang, so did others. German-looking gentlemen gave instrumental studies ; and every one was more or less uncomfortable from not liking to talk aloud. Henry met two or three Yorkshire friends, and so got on pretty well ; and Kate occasionally found time to come to him, and say how she wished she could be more with him, but she was obliged to keep moving about from one person to another. Every one went, however, pretty early, and when the number became thin Henry and Kate again found themselves on the verandah.

Said she to him, "Isn't that a pretty bangle?"

"Yes," said he ; "did you put it on your arm yourself?"

This was a random shot on his part. He had heard of devoted swains putting bangles on their loved ones arms, not to be taken off while love remained.

“No, I didn’t put it on myself, Mr. Inquisitive.”

“Who did, then?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

“Take it off.”

“I shan’t.”

“Let me take it off, then.”

“Why?”

“Because I want to.”

“Why do you want to?”

“I shan’t tell you that: I must have you let me take it off just because I ask you; and I am sure you will do what I ask.”

“Ha, ha! well, I’m sure! You *have* a good opinion of yourself. There it is, and there it shall stay, unless you tell me why you want it off;” and the beautiful blue eyes turned languishingly on Henry, while the moon shone clearly down on them, and there was no one near.

It was a moment to make a fool of any

man, but Henry was equal to the occasion ; instead of committing himself to the wished-for words he resorted to deeds, and grabbed at the offending bangle, trying to remove it. Kate was not at all displeased, but scuffled away from him and retired into the room, leaving him to himself, the whole scene, however, being observed by Count Caramba, who hardly knew what to make of it, as he glared through a chink in one of the blinds.

Henry soon came into the house again, and prepared to depart, and Kate absolutely went down to the door with him, remaining obdurate, however, to his requests to be allowed to remove that bangle ; and finally laughing as they reached the foot of the stairs, and taunting him with his proved inability to get the better of her.

“Eh ! what’s that ?” said the Captain, suddenly emerging from a little smoke-room on the ground-floor.

Henry was somewhat taken aback, and the more so when his fair companion cried, "Oh, papa, it is such a joke : I've fairly beaten Mr. Jolliffe. He has tried all he could to get me to take off this bangle ; and he declared I should do so because he asked ; and I've kept it on for all that, as you see."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Captain. "Good-night, Jolliffe. The ladies are generally too much for us, eh?"

And with that the abashed Henry went out to his hansom, feeling that he had rather put his foot in it with the old man.

The little circumstance last narrated showed the necessity of extreme caution and greater discretion in the future ; but the whole performance was enough to turn the head of any average youth who was not possessed of experience. Henry, however, whether by some innate quality, or, as is more probable, by having mixed with the mammon of unright-

eousness on the turf, was, despite his inexperience in these affairs, a very shrewd customer, and felt as yet that he could trust himself.

The next night Mrs. Moncreif's theatricals took place, and he was to go there and wait down-stairs till Kate and her mother arrived, so as to ascend in company with them.

Of course under the circumstances he was punctual, and equally of course they were late. However, he managed to pass the time regaling himself on tea, which was in readiness in an ante-room, where others, like himself apparently, were hoping for friends who came not yet.

Mrs. Moncreif herself presently came down-stairs, and encountering Henry welcomed him most kindly, though she could have no possible idea who he was. He, on his part, nothing backward, entered into animated conversation with her during the space of five or ten minutes, thinking at the time what a clear

proof this was that a presentable person, with a sufficient amount of cheek, might go to large entertainments without being invited by any one at all. Of course Henry had had a card for Mrs. Moncreif's, but it came through Kate, so that he was in reality a total stranger.

The probability, however, is, that a man who would go anywhere without an invitation would not be one whose appearance, or at any rate manners, would serve intuitively as his pass.

Kate and Mrs. Hamilton at last arrived, and with them Henry went up in due form to the charming room, which might almost be termed a model theatre.

The performances were of first-rate class ; and by them, and by observation of the numerous and distinguished audience, the mind was pretty well diverted, even from ideas of flirtation.

Still there was some sport afterwards when

refreshment was the order of the night ; and gentlemen struggled to the front to secure viands for ladies, who hovered in the rear ; the successful caterers proving a source of dire peril to others, as they made their way back again with plates of food or glasses of drink held up on high.

The foreign princes, noblemen, and others who especially affected Kate were wildly energetic in their efforts to get things for her ; so Henry let them do the work, and helped to consume what they brought to the little table which he had secured for the two ladies in a corner. This, as may be imagined, was very distasteful to the enamoured gentlemen, who received little more thanks than if they had been waiters ; and great was the fierce twirling of moustaches, and indignant glances of scorn at Henry, who steadily enjoyed himself without taking any notice.

When the time for departure arrived, he

was getting on famously, and making Mrs. Hamilton, who was a good-natured, easy-going soul, die with laughing at anecdotes of Oxford and elsewhere; while Kate seemed to be quite appropriating him as her own under her mother's very eyes. On the whole he thought it as well when they made a move to go.

Taking Mrs. Hamilton out to her carriage of course left Kate without an escort. This was observed in an instant by the lynx-like eyes of Prince Piccolo and Count Caramba, who forthwith pounced down on the damsel with proffered arms, each trying to push the other away, at first quietly, and with gradually increasing and unseemly violence.

"Miss Hamilton will permit me to escort her. I was the first," said the Italian, his voice rising above the bounds of decorum.

"No, I was here before you," retorted the Count, passion beginning to flame in his eyes.

“ You were not.”

“ You lie.”

At that moment Henry returned from the carriage and took Kate off, leaving the two rivals to fight out their quarrel over the empty air. So blind with rage were they that they actually did not see what had occurred, but fell to work, fighting tooth and nail just outside the door, rolling in consequence down the steps on to the pavement, and being with difficulty separated by the policeman, so firm a grip had they on one another's hair. Then, and not till then, did they find that the lady was gone.

Henry had promised to call at Eaton Square next day, and on going into the house it was not without a chill creeping sensation of dread that he saw and heard Captain Hamilton, who met him at the foot of the stairs. The reason for dread was that the Captain requested him to come into the little smoke-

room for a short while before going up to the ladies.

Arrived there, and the door being shut, the two gentlemen took seats, and Henry awaited the issue. This was it. The Captain commenced as if repeating something he had learned by heart.

“I am sure, Jolliffe, you will not mind my speaking to you as I am going to, and—you know—how pleased I have been to see you and make your acquaintance; but—I find that my daughter and you are already being talked about in Yorkshire—and as you know—that is to say, I feel sure you will agree—it is my duty to make some further enquiries from yourself as to your position.”

“Well,” thought Henry, “this *is* quick work, at all events : only four days since I first came here, and now to be carpeted by the old man in this way ! I must be monstrously cautious.” And so he remained silent, as if

waiting for more, in reality thinking what on earth he had better say, so as on the one hand not to commit himself, and on the other not to have to quit the business altogether.

Seeing that he paused, Captain Hamilton, being at a loss how to continue, remarked somewhat uneasily,

“Of course, perhaps I have no right to ask you all this.”

Henry seized on his cue now, for he at once obtained an idea for mastering the position.

“Right to ask me? Why, of course you have a right to ask me, Captain Hamilton. I have never been formally introduced to you or yours; and as you have been kind enough, notwithstanding, to receive me at your house, you are obviously entitled to an explanation of who I am and all about me.”

Thereupon he gave a strictly correct account of himself to the Captain, with references as

to the truth of it, but carefully abstained from even mentioning Kate's name. Thus he based the whole matter on the Captain's general right to know his position, seeing that he had not been regularly introduced; and in this fashion quite outflanked the wily officer, so far as any discovery about Kate was concerned. The old gentleman, however, concluded that he had substantially succeeded in his enterprise, by finding out that Henry was really eligible; and he never feared the capacity of his daughter to bring a country youngster like this to book.

Henry himself was quite prepared to find that the tale of his resources, respectable as it was, would, nevertheless, seem insignificant by comparison with others of the admirers; but the Captain appeared quite satisfied, and said, "I will now send the footman up to announce you, as if you had only just come."

“He must think me a fool,” said Henry to himself, “if he fancies I don’t understand that they know all what’s going on.”

Arrived up-stairs, he found the two ladies ; and, after a decent interval, the mother left the room for a few minutes, returning with beaming countenance, having obviously been to enquire the result of the interview. Henry was now made more of than ever : he was sung to, played to, and otherwise entertained ; while the choicest of button-holes was made for him on his departure, and put in by Kate’s own hands in the boudoir recess out of sight of her discreet parent. The situation was trying as her fingers lingered over their work, and she looked up, with studiously bewitching glances, into his eyes,—or perhaps we should hardly say “looked up,” for she was nearly as tall as her supposed lover, he being of the neat and shapely mould rather than of conspicuous size or stature.

On this occasion too he behaved with the most rigid propriety, principally because a fear was on him that Mrs. Hamilton might be espying him all the time ; so he went away as he had come, except that his system seemed to have suffered a shock from the dangers of the afternoon. Even Chambers noticed it when he got back to his rooms in Arlington street, and extracted from him over dinner, which they had together at the club, all that had occurred.

The recital caused much laughter, and a prophecy that Henry would, with certainty, be married ere long ; but he thought otherwise.

Somewhat he reflected with himself as to whether he was acting as he ought, but always solaced himself with the consideration that he had done nothing to lead to all this ; and as for Kate—though he was quite self-satisfied enough to believe in her love for him—he

concluded that she was not an individual who would suffer long in a case of unrequited affection. "Besides," thought he, "if people jump down one's throat in this scandalous manner, they don't deserve any pity, whatever happens."

Therefore he suffered matters to go on, and went through a most complete round of gaiety during the next six or eight weeks, remaining absolutely supreme at Eaton Square, and taking much pleasure in the worsting of all rivals. Dancing was a point in which he failed at first, despite his country training; at least he could not dance with Kate, who affected some step quite in advance of his attainments. Still, even this mattered little, for she would sit out with him any length of time; and that enraged Count Caramba & Co. more than anything else, as they walked past time after time, and still found the pair together.

The number of places Henry went to, the

number of people he got to know, all through Kate's arrangement, was perfectly surprising. The number of times he dined at Eaton Square, and the number of afternoons he spent there, shut up in the boudoir with her, was equally remarkable; and he began to wonder how it would all end, and how he was to get out of it without appearing to behave badly.

He had never once, all the time, lost his presence of mind, even when Kate sang to him as he sat close to her, hidden by the piano from Mrs. Hamilton who was to all appearances intensely interested in a novel,—sang to him, mark you, this song :—

“ Speak to me, speak !
Be my heart hard :
Or shall it melt
For one poor word ?
No vow to bind,
No pledge I seek :
Only be kind ;
Speak to me, speak.”

This, delivered in the most impassioned style, with occasional side-long looks at the obdurately silent one, ought to have brought him up to the mark if anything could ; but it didn't.

One day there came in an old Yorkshire clergyman well-known to the family, who, in fact, had christened Kate, and whom she had specially retained to perform the marriage service also for her.

“And when will it be ?” asked the old gentleman, for Kate somewhat pointedly reminded him of this obligation on his part.

“Oh, how should I know ? you must find out for yourself. There, I know you want to have some talk with mamma. Mr. Jolliffe, come and sit out here with me on the verandah.”

Henry followed as he was bid, but did not fail to catch an enquiring glance of the

clergyman directed towards him, and a significant nod on the part of Mrs. Hamilton.

"I wonder what they're talking about in there," said Kate, as they sat outside in the beautiful summer warmth.

"Don't know, I'm sure," replied he, somewhat unsentimentally.

"Poor old thing! he always wants to know when I am going to be married. I wonder if I ever shall be?"

"Stay a moment," cried Henry, clutching at an imaginary something just above her head. "There, I've caught it—a great spider that was just descending on you," and he made pretence to throw it down into the street. This broke the illusion, and effectually changed the subject, so that the young lady returned into the room almost out of patience.

Neither by little notes, of ever-increasing warmth, could she bring him to book. He

wrote verses to her ever and anon, it is true ; but then all her admirers did that, and in sober prose his remarks were sufficiently common-place.

Matters were getting serious. Ascot, with its attendant joys, was come and gone, and the season was progressing, yet here was this outrageous country youth Henry,

“ Whether his unripe years did want conceit,
Or he refused to take her figured proffer,
The tender nibbler would not touch the bait,
But smile and jest at every gentle offer.”

He must be settled with, and that speedily. There was that in Captain Hamilton's affairs which passed show. His financial position was really getting shakey, and Kate must be married this season ; besides, her two young sisters were rapidly growing up. So more pressure still was brought to bear on Henry ; and he at length, growing alarmed, sought desperately to establish a rupture on a particu-

lar night by dancing very frequently with some one else.

Kate took little notice of this ; but, to his horror, Mrs. Hamilton cornered him on the spot, and said, "I can't have you acting in this manner. Go and take my daughter down to supper, if you please."

He was fairly paralyzed by the authoritative tone in which this was said, and went obediently without a word to do her behest.

He soon found Kate, who at once took his arm and walked off, despite the protestations of the meek curate that she was engaged to him for the dance just beginning.

Lady Park—the hostess of that evening—had spared no trouble or expense to delight her guests, and the arrangement of flowers and wonderfully choice exotics, skilfully contrived to form quiet recesses here and there, was particularly praiseworthy.

Half way down the stairs Kate got the

unsuspecting Henry into one of these fairy nooks, and there was nothing for it but to sit by her side.

“Now, sir,” said she, “do you know what I think of you?”

“That I’m an awful brute, I know; but please don’t tell me so.”

“Yes, I *shall* tell you what I think of you.”

“Oh, don’t!” protests Henry, still affecting to believe that he is going to be scolded, whereas his instinct tells him that a tender speech is imminent.

But the inexorable lady continues, “I think you just a *dear*, a *darling*, and——”

“Oh! pardon me, Miss Hamilton, but this is my dance; I have been looking for you all over——”

Prince Piccolo has broken in upon them at this critical moment.

“How are you, Prince?” says Henry, cordially, “I am very glad to see you.”

“Quite well, I thank you, sir!”

“No, this is *not* your dance,” cries Kate, angrily; “*the last was*, and you never came near me,” and with this atrocious fiction she leaves the unfortunate Prince protesting and apologizing, while she goes with Henry down to supper.

Once in the room among others the beleaguered swain breathes anew; and as he establishes his charge in a seat and looks round on the viands, he says, quite gaily, being now, as he thinks, safe, “Well, what will you have?”

“Come nearer, and I’ll tell you.”

Nearer he comes, not at all suspicious; then she whispers in thrilling accents, “*I’ll have you!*”

A bomb-shell could not have startled him more; but with a desperate effort he regains his presence of mind, and pretends to treat the matter as a joke, saying with a laugh,

“Oh, yes ! I dare say ; wait till you get the chance !” and busies himself desperately in carving fowls and pouring out champagne.

But it is no use ; she returns to the charge, and will not be gainsaid.

“Yes, do you know, papa has found such a charming little house that will just suit us ?”

“The devil he has !” mentally ejaculates the unhappy Henry. Feeling, however, that he must speak now, or else for ever hold his peace, he commences, “But look here, dear” (he is obliged to appear affectionate), “what strikes me is, that you could never be happy without all this gaiety and entertaining people as you have been accustomed. Now, you see, I could never manage that.”

“Oh, Henry, dear, I am sick to death of it all, and do so long for a quiet home with you.”

Here was a poser, and he began to feel, as

it were, an utter brute in his efforts to repel her. Still he went on :

“Yes, I know you think that now, but you’d soon change your mind ; besides, you and I are very young. Would you not like to enjoy another season or two, and then see what you think of it ?”

“Oh, no, no ! my mind is quite made up.”

“Well, my darling—but there are so many people about one can’t talk. I’ll tell you what, I’ll come and talk to you the day after to-morrow about it, quietly by ourselves. That’ll be best, won’t it ? There’s such a bustle here one hardly knows what one’s doing.”

Then, without giving time for an answer, he leads her off up-stairs, and succeeds in getting through the rest of the evening without a renewed assault, for Kate thinks he is all right now.

Sleepless was the night that he passed, and

more than once he thought of weakly succumbing to his fate ; but sterner counsels prevailed. Chambers, it is true, derided him next morning, and said escape was impossible, —indeed, did not believe that he wanted to escape ; but Henry took the twelve o'clock train from King's Cross and fled off to Yorkshire to consult with Tom.

He apprised the good people at Newton by telegraph of his intended arrival. As may be surmised, they had heard little of him of late, at least from himself ; but a good many rumours had been about respecting his doings.

Tom had been terribly put out with the way he neglected the horses. He himself had done his best to direct their management, and they had been doing pretty well at the North Country Meetings—paying their way, at any rate ; but the idea of Henry fooling about in London, and not so much as writing

a line to show he took any interest in the stable, was beyond a joke. The wanderer, on his sudden return, was of course subjected to a rigid cross-examination by the girls and Mrs. Blackburn ; but he kept his own counsel until he got alone with Tom, to whom he unbosomed his soul and asked for advice.

Tom, being interested in the narrative, and remembering how he himself had suffered from Miss Whytehead, forgot his anger and reflected—

“ Well,” said he at length, “ I can’t see that they can want you for anything but your money.”

“ Indeed ! ” rejoined Henry, somewhat piqued. “ I don’t think that’s the girl’s reason, anyhow ; she could have any of these foreign counts and princes if she liked.”

“ Foreign counts and princes be blowed ! ” said Tom. “ Very likely the whole lot together aren’t worth as much as you are ; and she

knows that, depend on it. A girl like you describe would never think of marrying you for your own sake."

"I don't agree with you; but in any case, what shall I do to be saved?"

"Oh, write and say you've lost a lot of money; you'll not be bothered after that, I'll bet."

Henry decided at least to try this, and a letter was at length concocted, as follows:—

"Newton Vicarage.

"MY DEAR KATE,

"I had a letter from my agent to come down to Yorkshire this morning to see about some matters that have gone wrong. I hoped to have got back next day, so as to come and see you; but I now find I cannot. My affairs have got into such a seriously complicated state through the race-horses, that my agent and I will be engaged at least a

week in establishing anything like order ; and then the prospect looks black enough. I am sorry also, for this reason, I shall not be able to dine on Wednesday, as I promised, nor yet to appear on Friday night. Please make my excuses to Mrs. Hamilton, and believe me,

“ Yours gloomily,

“ H. JOLLIFFE.”

This was posted so as to start first thing in the morning. Henry expected an answer to it, but none came, at which he was rather vexed, and Tom laughed.

However, a visit to Malton and the horses put him in a more healthy frame of mind, and he vowed he would not miss Stockton and York August Meetings.

After a week was past, being now refreshed and re-invigorated, he returned to town, determined not to be made a fool of ; and went to call on the Hamiltons the very next

day, never dreaming, in his own self-conceit, that Tom would prove a true prophet.

Very much, however, was he deceived. From having been the petted and cherished treasure, he found himself received in about the same style as the inane curate was deemed worthy of. He was of course treated with civility, but there was no shutting up in boudoirs now, no being left alone with Kate; in short, no eager desire for his company. Tom's device had obviously succeeded, and yet he was not happy. It had, in fact, succeeded too well; and when he saw that his money, and not himself, was the object of pursuit, he felt wounded in his self-esteem. Kate, however, as he thought, still remained the same, but was now deprived of opportunity. He often met her still, for, having established himself among so many of the Hamiltons' friends, he got invitations direct now to all the places where she went.

He was, in fact, at last in a very dangerous mood, being impatient of the parental opposition, and much disposed, out of pure spite, to go in for a desperate flirtation, since the danger was clearly past. Had they been alive to the real facts, it is quite possible they might, by judicious management, have landed him while he was actuated by this spirit, which sprang simply from the contrariety of human nature, or animal either,—for instance, the pig, who must always be driven in the other direction from that in which you really wish him to go.

He commenced downright love-making to Kate, and at her instance wrote letters under cover to her maid, which were most finished and elaborate, of the amatory kind, accompanied by poems that contained fire enough to satisfy the most craving young damsel under the sun. He encountered her here, there, and everywhere by appointment, and felt a savage

glee in thus scoring off the old people, who were endeavouring so strenuously to get rid of him. Indeed, for them it was now a matter of the last importance. His Imperial Highness Prince Lambertini had appeared ardently on the scene ; if he could but be secured, all would yet be well.

But Henry was determined not to let them slight him in this way, and stuck to the lady in a manner that must have seemed extraordinary to her in contrast with his previous phlegmatic behaviour.

“Nay,” thought he, “I’d even run off with her to vex them ; but then it would turn out that I hadn’t lost my money, and the laugh would be on their side after all, for they’d have gained their original object.”

Kate all this while seemed intensely devoted to Henry ; and thus matters stood when he had to go down again to Yorkshire for the wedding of a friend. This was on a Wednesday

day near the end of July Tom was much pleased to hear of the success of his device ; but Henry was very surly over it. The wedding took place, and on Friday he got a letter from Kate.

“ Eaton Square.

“ DARLING,

“ Please be sure to come back to-morrow (Saturday), and call here on Sunday, as my people are going away, and I shall be all alone. In haste, with much love.

“ Your own KATIE.”

He at once decided to go, still in a spirit of revenge against the Captain and Mrs. Hamilton, thinking how splendid it would be to take possession in their absence ; but on the Saturday morning before he started came another note from Miss Kate, saying her people had changed their plans, and she was grieved to say were not going.

He therefore stayed on at the Vicarage over Sunday, heard Mr. Blackburn's sermon, retailed all the news from town he could think of, submitted to much chaff, and then set off to the Metropolis, determined not to be put down by any father or mother in existence.

On arriving at his rooms there was a letter from Kate awaiting him. It ran thus—

“Eaton Square.”

“MY DEAR HENRY,

“You will be surprised, and I fear grieved, to hear that His Imperial Highness Prince Lambertini has asked me to be his wife, and I have accepted him. I thought I had better tell you before any one else did. I feel that I have not treated you well, but it cannot be helped; and if you knew all you might forgive me. Please, *dear*, try to forget me. I know it will be difficult at first, but you will soon manage it, and I hope we

shall always meet as the best of friends. I must not write further, but remain,

“Just once more,

“Your own KATIE.”

Here indeed was a surprise! “Heavens!” was Henry’s first thought, “and I have put myself in a position where I am considered to deserve pity! Fool that I have been! She thinks now I really loved her, whereas it was only my idiotic spite to the old parents. I thought I had her quite safe though. Oh, this passes all understanding!” and he sat down and wrote a letter of congratulation to Mrs. Hamilton on her daughter’s engagement.

CHAPTER VII.

“Materials—pregnant with infernal flame,
Which into hollow engines long and round,
Thick rammed, at the other bore with touch of fire
Dilated and infuriate, shall send forth—
With thundering noise—
Such implements of mischief as shall dash
To pieces and o’erwhelm whatever stands
Adverse, that they shall fear we have disarmed
The Thunderer of his only dreaded bolt.
Nor long shall be our labour ; yet ere dawn
Effect shall end our wish.”—‘*Paradise Lost*,’ VI. 485.

OUR discarded lover was not one to take his position to heart, except in so far as he felt aggravated at being defeated even by an Imperial Highness.

“After all,” he reflected, “I did not want her for myself — wouldn’t have her, in fact ; and it’s only a dog-in-manger business

to be vexed with another fellow taking her."

The most irritating point was, that he really had been going on lately as if he meant it ; simply, as we have seen, through opposition to the old people, and also partly from a feeling of security, on account of his supposed losses. This now, of course, made him appear in the light of a disappointed suitor, although, as he said, he had handicapped himself out of the race. He was fain to content himself with the knowledge that he had the whole field of princes, counts, &c., beaten to a standstill at one time, and had nothing to do but go in and win, which of his own choice he avoided doing.

What cause then for perturbation of soul ? Simply the proved fact that Kate had not cherished that real affection for him which he, pluming himself in the mirror of his own conceit, imagined he had inspired her withal.

Poor Henry ! he had acted wisely in a worldly sense throughout, and shown acuteness beyond his years ; but that was no reason why he should expect to get so utterly the better of a young lady who was completing her second London season. No ; Kate had liked him well enough to marry him—if with money. He was a nice, good-looking boy, she said, and his eyes, if nothing else, made him lovable ; in fact, she supposed she did love him. Poor fellow, she hoped he would not think her very cruel ; but without money the thing was absurd. She certainly preferred him to the prince, probably always should do ; but what matter ? She should see lots of him in the future, and she certainly did not mean to give up being on good terms with him ; only of course it would be a Platonic matter.

We shall have more to say of Kate anon ; but must for the present follow the movements of the cast-off swain, who, sooner than face the

ridicule of London friends, returned the very next day to Yorkshire.

Even while on his way there he seemed doomed to have the affair raked up. The 'Morning Post,' for instance, had an announcement of the intended marriage, which it stated was to take place on August the 9th—remarkably rapid work apparently to us, who are accustomed to live somewhat plethoric lives, and dislike to be hurried.

Then at York station "that ass Middleton" came up and said in a loud voice, "Hallo, Jolliffe! I hear you've been distinguishing yourself. Is it true that you ran a prince to a head in the Matrimonial Stakes the other day?"

To which civil answer must needs be made, and jocular if possible, for fear of apparent soreness and consequent chaff. Keeping to the metaphor, Henry finds himself constrained to say,

“ I wasn’t ‘ spinning,’ man, otherwise I could have ‘ walked away from him ’ at any time I liked.”

This is true enough ; but none the less does the “ ass Middleton ” disbelieve it, and persist in his gibes, so that anger had almost supervened, but that the time for the Newton train to start arrived opportunely.

At Newton Tom is objectionably inclined to credit himself with having managed the whole affair, and kept Henry out of harm’s way. Especially is he pleased at the verification of his opinion as opposed to Henry’s respecting the lady herself. But he sees ere long that Henry is discomposed by the course things have taken, and so he drops the subject pretty much ; while the others, who have no data but vague gossip to go upon, are very glad to hear all they can, but haven’t much to say.

Mr. Blackburn seems to be quite devoting his attention to the turf ever since the mare

and foal were located with him. He has got the pedigree of Bartimæus and the mare fully tabulated, and discourses most learnedly on the various excellent animals that appear therein; and it is quite on the cards that, if fairly led up to it by discussion over the port, he would be willing and desirous to back the foal as his fancy for the Derby of three years hence.

Henry soon catches some of the old healthy spirit after hearing the good man talk, and going with him to see this young Bartimæus, who connects the blood of the two sensational animals that ran first and second in that memorable City and Suburban. To view this spectacle of the beautiful Blair Athol mare with her young hopeful; to think of the past, and Blair Athol himself; to look forward to the future, obscure, yet surely bright for the baby race-horse; then to feel the fresh country air, and watch the fox-terriers, delighted at

release from kennel, harrying wildly around, or perchance making futile chase after some careless hare,—from all this there sprang sensations of renewed vitality in Henry's mind; and the artificial round of London pleasures, with the cloud of fancied loves, flirtations, disappointments, and pique, began melting and fading away.

He himself was overjoyed to find this; it seemed, indeed, a double coming home, for he was also returning to himself after a considerable absence. To set all right, however, he felt that some exciting exploit was desirable, and the opportunity for such was not wanting.

It so chanced that between Newton and the nearest market town, Barnstaple to wit, a distance of some nine miles intervened; and it was necessary for those at Newton not unfrequently to resort to Barnstaple. Tom and Henry often went. There was a club there, and

divers other sources of amusement; and Mr. Blackburn had to go in every week on his magisterial duties.

The road was a very fair one, as roads go, despite the efforts of sundry superannuated gentlemen in corduroy breeches, blue woollen hose, and large boots, the object of whose lives apparently was to promote stumbling-blocks for the equine race, by hacking up casual stones here and there, or by causing fresh ones to be brought, and then scattering them, as it would seem, broadcast upon the track—in the heat of summer too, when there was not a chance of their being resolved into regular macadam until the wet season came on and softened the surface for their reception. The old men took especial pleasure in adopting this course just in the steepest parts of the steepest hills, no doubt thinking that horses there would be more liable to fall, and would in such case also cause a more thorough disaster

than if the accident happened on level ground.

Old road-menders almost invariably act in this manner ; and as a man is, legally speaking, held to intend the natural consequences of his acts, it is no great stretch to say that they *intend* to throw horses down, for that is the only *natural* consequence that their acts can, humanly speaking, have.

However, old men notwithstanding, this road was fairly capable of being driven on but for three obstacles, and thereby hangs the present tale.

These obstacles were, in fact, three gates, which by some mysterious ancient right, whereof the memory of man knew not to the contrary, a certain Mr. Reckit was entitled to keep, and thus bar the passage of all mankind on said road, until mankind got down from his coach, carriage, cart, or wheel-barrow, and condescended to open the same.

Absolutely purposeless were these gates. It is true, enclosing as they did about two miles of the road, Mr. Reckit, who owned the land on both sides, was enabled to let the two spaces comprised within them for a sum of 30s. per annum, to such owners of cattle as affected for their beasts that species of precarious sustenance which can be enjoyed on the small strips of grass at each side of a road, and on the hedge-bottoms.

But Mr. Reckit was a very rich man, and 30s. a year were useless to him, while to the mass of mankind these gates were a source of dire rage, cursing, swearing, and all manner of evil; especially if perchance one was driving alone, with a lively horse, when it became necessary to choose between two ills—either to keep holding the gate open, and trust your horse to chance till it got through, whereupon it doubtless ran away; or else, in your efforts not to lose the horse, to let the gate swing upon

the carriage with much damage thereto. You could not possibly lead the horse and hold the gate, at least not long enough to get clear.

So matters stood at that time, and Henry, whose study of Bentham and other works led him to the conclusion that the destruction of these gates would be most consistent with sound principles of utility, and be manifestly for "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," had long ere this conspired with Tom to make an end of them, and many efforts had been made in that direction. These efforts had been carried out on a plan prescribed by the village butcher, who, when emboldened by various threepennyworths of rum, had been known to put his precept in practice upon one of his own gates instead of the obnoxious ones. Whether the rum had dulled his intellect so as to cause a mistake, or whether, as some said, he really would never have ventured to attack

any other gate than his own, does not clearly appear.

The plan or system, however, was a good one, and with a less determined man than Mr. Reckit would have availed. He, however, was ancient and pig-headed ; steadfastly purposed to assert his right in defiance of all men. The manner of the plan was this : to open wide the gate, having first procured a large stone ; then to insert your stone between the gate-post and the heel of the gate about half way down ; then to pull the gate to, whereby the hinges are drawn bodily from the post. So great is the leverage you can thus apply against the stone that failure is impossible ; only of course your stone must be large enough, otherwise it will fall down, or the gate shut on it without result. Many times and oft had Tom and Henry in their journeyings to and from Barnstaple performed this feat, and laid the disabled gate by the road-side.

The wrath of Mr. Reckit was great, and he had procured more powerful hinges, and riveted them at the other side of the posts, thinking that so their removal was impossible. In this he was right; but, inasmuch as the leverage power compelled something to give way, these extra precautions only resulted in the gates themselves breaking right in two, whence arose much more damage and trouble in repairing.

Nevertheless, the indomitable Reckit stuck to his work, and would not yield. Nay, he even caused placards to be printed of “£5 Reward.—Whereas some evil-disposed person or persons did, on or about the — day of —, unlawfully and maliciously, &c., &c.” But detection of the offenders did not ensue. Nay, they even tore down the offending structures once more, the very night after this proclamation was issued, and this time, with immense labour, conveyed them far away. They were

exceedingly large and heavy, but Tom devised a means of carriage by getting one end placed on the foot-board of the dog-cart behind; then Henry and he alternately held up the other end, whilst one led the horse. Thus did they remove each gate separately, and cast them all into a deep ditch; but still Mr. Reckit returned to the charge. Due search was made, and the lost were found and replaced.

The time had now arrived when something more thorough and complete must be done, and to Henry, in his then restless frame of mind, it appeared feasible and desirable to blow the gate-posts to atoms with gunpowder. To Tom such an adventure savoured too much of hazard and danger for him to embark in. Indeed, he was now rapidly arriving at a time of life when discretion begins to assert itself. But Henry would not be put off his enterprise; and so he entered into alliance with Jack, who was now become a stalwart youth, and

sufficiently reckless to carry out this nefarious project.

The first thing they did was to go to York, in order to purchase any necessary appliances at shops where they were not known. The principal requirement was a large auger, and this they easily procured ; a rope was likewise necessary, for it was decided that the only safe way to go to business was by descending out of a bed-room window when every one was in bed and the house locked up. This also was soon forthcoming, the vendor of the article assuring them that it was a portion of the very same rope that was then used for the York Minster bells,—a good omen, as they thought.

Having satisfied themselves that nothing more was necessary, they returned home, and prepared for action the very next night. Very ignorant, however, were they in the mysteries of blasting operations, as will be seen.

Tom regarded the whole business with a good deal of apprehension, and indeed Henry and Jack were not without some doubts as to the rope performance ; for, though accustomed to all kinds of every-day exercises, they were by no means accomplished gymnasts, and to go forth out of a third-story window dependent solely on a rope was a matter requiring some little nerve, especially as the descent would have to take place in the night time. Then as to climbing up again, there was of course no opportunity to practise, and see whether they could do it or not. They must just trust to chance.

Some touch-paper was made of the old-fashioned sort, such as we are accustomed to find attached to our fifth of November crackers and squibs, and which in the days of our youth gave us much anxiety by so frequently leaving the question in doubt as to whether it had gone out or not ; invariably remaining torpid

so long as we watched the firework which we destined for our delectation, but equally invariably performing its work at the moment when we had given up hope, and taken the thing into our hands again to relight it, whence arose explosions in our face and dire dismay.

This primitive saltpetre touch-paper was of course most ill-suited for blasting ; but our conspirators, as is usual with persons utterly ignorant on the given subject, were completely confident.

A couple of flasks of ordinary powder and some paper for wadding were all the other articles they thought fit to provide. The auger was carefully secreted in an outhouse below, as it was no use taking it up-stairs merely to bring down again.

For disguise, which was also very requisite, they donned somewhat outrageous costumes : Henry being clad in white breeches, white stockings, and white canvas boating-shoes,

with a white towel wrapped, turban-wise, round his head; then a most gay flowered dressing-gown, and, to crown all, a pair of trousers tied round his neck, the rearmost part of which garments hung down behind like some peculiar hood.

Jack tied round his head and ears a red spotted handkerchief, which met under his chin; and was further draped in a flannel cricket-suit, the shirt being, however, worn outside the trousers, and a belt put on over all round the waist. He also had India-rubber-soled shoes.

These costumes were remarkable enough—far too much so, in fact; for they were sure to attract the attention of any one who saw them, which was by no means what was required. However, such as they were they were decided on; and behold the two, thus caparisoned, standing in much excitement in Henry's room at dead of night, the good Mr. Blackburn

having long since seen the household up-stairs, and securely bolted and barred all doors, or other means for exit or ingress. Slumber reigns supreme save in this room, and there, the third member of the party, stands Tom, nervous and tremulous, fearful of some mishap. The window is an old-fashioned one, divided into three separate parts, each part being, as may be imagined, somewhat narrow. The rope is securely fastened round one of the middle upright columns of the frame, which is sufficiently solid, being other than they make them in these days. The right hand sash is now opened as far as it will go, that being the side from which the egress has to be made, so as to descend on the soft grass, and miss the hard gravel walk in case of a fall. It is a dark night. Tom looks out, feels the rope, and shudders.

“Now then,” says Henry ; “have you got the matches, Jack ?”

“Yes.”

“And I’ve got the flasks of powder and the touch-paper ; there’s nothing else ?”

“No.”

“Then here goes.” And, not without a trifle of extra heart-beating, Henry approaches the window.

“You’d better not,” says Tom feebly.

“Oh, nonsense ! give us a hand ;” and so the performance begins.

It is by no means easy, however, to get out of a narrow window feet first, especially when you are clad in a dressing-gown which is much inclined to ruck up, and refuse to accompany your person, as you wriggle yourself forth. This any one who tries the experiment will find out, and it is unnecessary to dilate on it here.

Suffice it Henry did manage to emerge into the night, and was at length fairly aswing in the darkness. First and foremost now the

rope, stretched against the window-frame, gave a mighty crack.

This was more than Tom could bear. "For God's sake," he hoarsely whispered, "come back, come back!" Then, turning in desperate agitation to Jack, he cried, "For heaven's sake, man, hold on to the rope! It's going to break!"

Of course, however, the rope is not going to do anything of the kind, and Henry, who, after the first moment in his unusual situation, finds to his relief that he is descending easily enough, reaches the ground in safety, and sends up the welcome words, "All right."

The ice thus broken, Jack comes out as a matter of course, only with even more squeezing than Henry, as he is bigger, and fits the window more tightly.

It must be mentioned that this particular window was at the end of the house, and was a solitary one, no others being below it; so that

it was chosen for this special purpose rather than Jack's or Tom's, where other windows would have had to be passed in the descent, with probable damage to the glass thereof, and with certain wakening and alarm of the sleepers within.

The scared, wan face of Tom can now be just dimly descried peering out from above. "Tie the rope up somewhere," he whispers, "else some one will come and climb in when you're away."

Henry laughs, but hoists Jack on his shoulders, who secures it to a nail high up on the wall—a nail that they had spotted in the day time before, and so were prepared for when they were coming down, otherwise damage might have resulted. The auger is now obtained, the yard-gates quietly climbed over,—a by no means easy matter,—and they are off for the field of action.

It is a nice fresh night ; somewhat dark, for

the moon has not yet risen ; but the air has an invigorating sparkle about it admirably suited to stimulate the spirit of devilry which has taken hold on the youths.

“Oh !” thinks Henry, “how far better is this than all the absurd nonsense of a London season put together !” and in the free ecstasy of the moment he feels inclined to “whoop,” and “Tally ho,” “run,” “jump,” anything just to give vent to the wild joy that is within him.

But caution must be observed, for they are going along the regular Barnstaple road, and may meet some one. Eagerly they press on for the first gate, some mile and a half distant, and it is soon reached. A hasty survey is made in all directions to see that no one is near, and then the work begins. Confusion ! The post is as hard as iron ! The auger will not make any way in it at all, even though pushed with the utmost force they can apply !

They struggle, they toil, till the perspiration runs off their brows, first one taking a spell and then the other ; but those massive old posts are of the most seasoned oak, and are impregnable to such a tool as they are employing.

It is no use. Exhausted and dispirited they are fain to return by the way that they came, mournfully reflecting on the failure, and somewhat exercised by the uncertainty as to the possibility of ascent by that rope.

That matter is, however, soon settled, for they find it much easier than they expected, and the entrance head first through the window is decidedly easier than the feet first exit, although it is necessary in this case to creep along the floor on the hands until the whole body and legs can get in.

The rope is now drawn up and secreted, and all tokens of the intended crime are put aside ;

then bed, and untroubled sleep, all these matters notwithstanding.

So ended the first attempt. But the project was by no means abandoned ; only it was now seen to be one that demanded more care than was imagined.

As a result of this Henry made a special journey over to Puddlesbro', and there casually introduced the subject of blasting in conversation with an iron-stone friend, who soon told him all he wanted to know. He now found out that, even if they could have bored a hole with the big auger, it would have been of no use whatever to fill it with paper or anything of that kind on the top of the powder. The explosion would merely in such a case have blown the paper out, as a gun does a wad, and left the gate-post unharmed. The best thing to do was, having made and charged the hole, to plug it up with a mixture of clay and tow, and of course to discard the ridiculous old touch-

paper, which could not possibly burn through this compound, but to use an ordinary string fuse, any amount of which could easily be procured, and which would burn through anything.

So then he returned very much wiser in these particulars, and brought with him many yards of fuse, and a centre-bit, wherewith to bore several small holes in the posts close together, and thus open out a way for the big auger to get to work.

The next day was spent in preparations, principally consisting in kneading up clay and tow together into a large dough-like mass, and testing the length of fuse required to enable any one to run two or three hundred yards before it was burned out. A mallet and rammer were added to the list of tools, which were all placed ready in the outhouse, hidden behind some old wine-cases; and when the night came, and the good man had secured his establishment, when the innocent among the

household were asleep, then once more was re-enacted the scene already described, with safety as before, and with less perturbation on the part of Tom. Henry has the powder and clay in his dressing-gown pockets; in his hands he carries the big auger and the mallet. Jack wields the centre-bit and rammer, while in his pocket is the box of matches. Very difficult is it to scale the yard-doors with all these impediments; but it is done, and they are fairly-on their way, this time with very different prospects of success.

They had not progressed far before they heard the sounds of approaching steps, and presently they met the doctor of the village—a timorous little man—who was walking home after seeing a patient. There is a moon to-night, and it is certainly foolish to give him any unnecessary chance of recognition; but the inducement to frighten him is irresistible, and Henry springs towards him as they

are passing, with a weird and horrible yell, waving the auger, like some strange weapon in the air.

The Doctor does not stay for more, but runs for his life, and the two have a hearty laugh as they hear his little feet pattering away in the distance.

But the first gate is soon reached, due investigation of the neighbourhood made, and then to work. The centre-bit drill is not to be denied, even by such oak as this, and presently three holes are made in close proximity midway down the post upon which the gate is hung. Now for the big auger; hurrah! it bites! Started in the midst of the three above-mentioned holes, it finds the way thus partially prepared for it; and forcibly pressed on and turned, it soon gets a hold on the wood, and wins its way inexorably in, despite the desperate hardness.

Henry turns till he has made good a depth

of full two inches, and then stops for breath, while the metal of the auger is too hot to touch, so severe is the work that it has been doing.

Jack carries on the game ; then Henry again ; and at least seven or eight inches are penetrated, which is thought enough. Now for the powder ! The hole has been bored in a slightly downward direction, so that the charge runs easily down. It is full now within three inches of the outside. Where is the fuse ? Here it is, all right. See that it is stuck well into the powder, and then fall to with your clay and tow. Ram it in hard ; beat it in with mallet on rammer. Do this to the very utmost of your capacity, lest by any chance it be blown out and the gate-post remain unhurt. There, we can make no better of it. It is all ready to be fired ; so let us on to the next gate, for we must have the three charged first, and then enjoy the sport as we go home.

A walk of a mile, and another post operated on ; then on to the last, and behold all is now ready.

The work has taken between two and three hours ; but it is done, and with hearts beating we approach the climax.

“ Whatever we do,” says Henry, “ we must be sure no one is near, or coming ; for it would never do to have an accident.”

So a strict search is made ; but the place is still as the dead, and not a foot-fall sounds upon the road. All is safe. The moon casts a sickly light upon the scene, and the doomed gate hanging on its fatal post looms out against the background of white road, almost preternaturally large, and, as it were, instinct with ghostly life. Jack holds the match-box.

“ Give it me,” cries Henry, trembling with excitement, “ and be getting away.”

Jack moves off, and Henry strikes a match. It goes out, and the suspense is prolonged.

Now another. This one burns bravely ; it is touching the fuse. Fizz ! the fuse is lighted. Away run Henry and Jack down the road as hard as they can go, while the steady fizzing of the fuse still sounds in their ears. They have got some two hundred yards, and must needs look back. There it is, spitting its sparks yet. It is a supreme moment, watching those sparks, and expecting the event with nerves strung to the utmost tension. Will it never come ? There it is ! And with a terrific report and a blaze of light the thing is done, and all is still.

Now the two rush frantically back to the spot to see what has resulted. There is the gate, in fragments over the road, and the post split in four, and lying in the form of a Maltese cross ! Nothing could be better. They hastily clear the road, so that it may be safe for horses, and then away in breathless haste, for the outraged Reckit must have heard this even in his

bed, which is not far off, and with his myrmidons may be nigh at hand.

Soon the next victim is reached, and the fire deftly applied ; once more the flight, and the delirious joy of expectation, as the squib-like fuse spits on. Bang ! What a noise. By Jove ! what is that ? Something went whizzing overhead, and fell on the road behind Jack and Henry. But they heed it not now, so intent are they to see the state in which this gate has been left. This post has been shattered to fragments, and lies none can say where ; but the gate itself is on the road, not much injured. No matter ; throw it into the ditch out of the way and come on. Two or three hundred yards down the road Jack tumbles over something.

“ What on earth is that ? ”

“ Why, I do declare it’s an immense piece of the gate-post, that has been blown right over our heads just now. My word, if this had

hit one of us it would have made rather a mess ! ”

Thus says Henry, and they run on to their last mine, which is the one nearest home.

This piece of post flying so far was somewhat alarming, especially as they knew the present fuse was the shortest of the three.

“ We must run like anything the instant I light this,” cried Henry, as in some apprehension he addressed himself to the task, and Jack stood anxiously by.

It so happened that in charging this post they had dropped a good deal of powder on the ground, and some malicious sprite chose to direct a spark from the match among it ; instantly it flared up in a most lurid manner. Henry was just about lighting the fuse, and the only thing that occurred to both him and Jack was, that the said fuse had somehow gone wrong, burnt all off at once, and that

the explosion was taking place. Panic-stricken by this, they fled wildly away ; but the sudden glare of the powder around them had left them for a moment or two quite blind, and the result was, both rushed headlong into a ditch, where they lay for some time quaking with fear, and thoroughly wetted and bemired. Presently they ventured to look out, and all was still ; finally they dared to approach the gate. There was everything as they had left it: the fuse untouched, and the explosion still a thing of the future.

Somewhat foolish they felt ; but neither could laugh at the other, and no one had seen them, so business was quietly resumed, and this time efficaciously. There was another brilliantly excruciating period as they sped away, thinking every instant to hear that glorious bang ; and then when it came, in all its magnificence, another inspection of the shattered ruins, and away home, very careful

to take with them all the paraphernalia of the work.

So ended the memorable performance, which, though in a certain sense trivial, yet contained elements of excitement that were equalled by nothing either of the two youngsters ever experienced before or after. By some it might be thought wrong, as being a species of practical joke ; but Henry's maxim was, that so long as he did no material damage to persons or useful property, a joke was justifiable ; and in the present case he and Jack really acted for the benefit of the neighbourhood. On the whole, therefore, there was nothing very atrocious in the matter, though of course Mr. Reckit would think otherwise.

Home was soon regained, and, first and foremost, all the tools were carefully hidden ; then up the rope they climbed, put that and everything else straight, and went to bed, after telling Tom what had been done,—not that

he needed to be told, for he had heard all the reports.

Everything was so well managed that, on a subsequent occasion, when Mr. Reckit hinted to old Mr. Blackburn that he suspected Henry and Tom of having perpetrated this grievous deed, the worthy gentleman warmly assured him that such could not be the case, as he had himself seen the youths go up to bed that very night ; had himself locked the house, and all remained as he had left it till the next morning.

Henry, who came in at the moment, assured Mr. Reckit that he had gone up to bed at eleven o'clock that night, and had never come *down-stairs* again till breakfast-time next morning (which was, in fact, true) ; so the aggrieved gentleman was utterly unable to make anything out.

It was long before Henry got to sleep on what remained of that night, so thoroughly

had he been awakened ; and then he was soon aroused by his letters being brought up. One was addressed in Kate's writing, and the sight of this effectually prevented his going to sleep again. He tore it open with a slightly trembling hand, and perfectly yelled with astonishment on reading its contents, which ran thus:—

“Captain and Mrs. Hamilton request the pleasure of Mr. Jolliffe's company on August 14th, at the marriage of their daughter to *Mr. Leroy !*”

CHAPTER VIII.

“No shame but mine : I must, forsooth, be forced
To give my hand, oppos’d against my heart,
Unto a mad-brain rudesby, full of spleen ;
Who woo’d in haste.”—‘*Taming of the Shrew.*’

“Now what does all this mean ?” the reader will probably say. “Was ever anything so ridiculously improbable ?”

On this latter point we will not dispute, though we might show cause with some effect in favour of probability were we so minded ; but we really are bound to clear up without delay these intricacies respecting Kate.

Now the turning-point on which these somewhat sensational facts hinge was this : Leroy was in difficulties,—unknown as yet to the outer world, but for all that certain and

unavoidable. It is not well to inflict any dry legal disquisition upon a long-suffering public, so it will suffice to remark that there is a law, and that by that law a promoter of a public company, when he procures the prospectus to be issued to the public, should take care to have reference made specially therein to any contracts existing between himself and others in regard to the company or its affairs. Any prospectus issued without all information of this kind being fully set out is deemed a fraud against those who take shares on the faith of it; and those who knowingly issue it are liable accordingly.

To take the example of the National Ironworks Company, Limited,—had Leroy made a direct contract with the original members of it that he would promote the Company, that is, place all the shares, in consideration of £90,000 being paid him, there would have been no possible doubt that such contract

would have had to be set out in the prospectus, so that the eyes of the public might be fully opened. But long before this, astute gentlemen had concluded, that by going behind the back of the Company, as it were, or rather, by settling before they ever became—as they thought—promoters of a company, their own profit, through a private arrangement with the vendor, as Leroy did with Sir Irving Allix, the law might be effectually evaded; and the public led to believe that it was only paying the intrinsic value of the property, inasmuch as no mention of any contract for promotion-money would appear in the prospectus.

The statute cannot contemplate—so argued the promoting fraternity—any interference with, or investigation into, the conduct of the vendor after he gets his money. It is all paid to him, fairly and squarely. What he does with it afterwards is no one's concern but his own. If he agrees to pay us a certain part

of what he gets that is not the Company's affair at all. When we made the arrangement with him we were not promoters of the Company. The Company agree to pay him so much ; they pay it, get their property in return, and then the matter is at an end, so far as they go.

All this may have some show of reason in it, and in fact held water for a considerable time ; for of course it may well be that a would-be vendor of property is perfectly justified in remunerating the man who obtains him a purchaser ; but then, to make this all right, the purchaser must be a rational independent being, having a capacity to judge of the matter for himself.

But, as distinguished from this, the fatal point to the Leroy tribe was, that, having made their arrangement with the vendor, by which the purchase-money was to be largely increased, and in part paid to them, they did

not make the sale to any independent person or corporation, but proceeded to *form* a company for the express purpose of buying the property on the terms agreed; and this company, being at the outset their own creation, as we have seen, had really no separate control over the affair, but adopted, as a matter of course, the arrangement which was the very object for which it had been called into existence.

The shares were then offered to the public, who fondly imagined that the Company, being now apparently a substantial reality, had of course attended to its own interests as *opposed* to those of the vendor, whereas up to that time the vendor and the promoter had arranged all according to their own views, and the Company was a mere puppet in their hands. A plain, common-sense view of the statute shows, that all contracts should be set out in the prospectus which would be likely to

influence the mind of a reasonable man who was thinking of taking shares ; and it is clear that any contract which causes an excess to be paid on the purchase-money may most materially depreciate the value of the shares.

Leroy had promoted a good many companies during the last four years on these terms, and had altogether received an immense sum of money as the result of his labours. Some he had lost ; but he had cleared out with a very large fortune, and deemed himself without another care in the world, except the difficulty of ascending to the top of the social tree.

He saw little or nothing of his old city friends now, and took a somewhat absurd pride in not knowing what was going on in the business world. His ambition was to attain to political distinction, make a first-rate marriage, and so become a great man. He had made great way in this direction, having proclaimed himself a most orthodox

Conservative, and being very free with his money for charitable or any other objects. He had already been chosen as a candidate for the town of Chesterton in Surrey when the next election came, and had won golden opinions from the free and independent electors of that place on account of the abundant sums he spent among them.

Lady Geraldine Quantock, the second daughter of the Earl of Chesterton, the great potentate of that neighbourhood, had already attracted his attention as a desirable match, and he flattered himself that she was not indisposed to look kindly on him.

Leroy was slumbering—so to speak—upon the crater of a volcano, revelling in the glorious prospect before him. The distant country, the blue sky, the bright genial sun, all seemed to speak of happiness, and everything that should make life glad, if we may continue the simile ;

then came the rude awakening—a volcanic eruption—and all is blank and desolate.

It was even so : for some time the minds of legal gentlemen had been exercised on the subject of promoters of companies, and at last an effort was made to bring a very distinguished one to book. The case was a precisely similar one to that we have already described in our account of the formation of the National Ironworks Company, Limited.

Leroy happened to be dining at Lord Chesterton's in town on that evening of June when he heard the first news of these proceedings.

“I see,” said one of the guests, “one of these company promoters, Baron Kaufman, is to be made to disgorge his ill-gotten gains if possible.”

“Serve him right too,” replied the host. “I’ve no sympathy with such fellows.”

Lord Chesterton was a careless, forgetful

man, and retained no recollection now as to the way Leroy had made his money, even if he had ever known.

The subject of conversation was soon changed, Leroy not venturing to show any interest in it, though he would have given anything to have heard more; and it may well be conjectured that even the fair Geraldine was nothing to him that night in comparison with his desire to get to the club and see the papers.

He was at length released, and hastened off in a hansom to fully investigate. His worst suspicions were confirmed: Baron Kaufman was to be sued by a shareholder of the Nevada Mine Company—the shares of which were now at 75 per cent. discount—for the return of the money he (the shareholder) had invested on the faith of the prospectus, which did not reveal an agreement between Kaufman and the vendors, whereby the former was to

receive a large portion of the purchase-money. This would be a test case, said the report, and if decided against the Baron, would lead to a very great deal of money being recovered in a similar manner from other quarters.

Leroy felt a tremor of apprehension as he read these words. He had always had a dim sort of foreboding that something of this kind might happen ; but latterly a feeling of peaceful security had more and more crept over him. Now, what might ensue was too awful to contemplate. "If Kaufman is beaten, I am ruined," he muttered to himself, as he strove to reckon up how much he could be called on to give back. He could not call it all to mind; but he could easily recollect more than he could possibly pay. "To lose all too now! when the fortune is in my grasp, and everything going well! Oh, I cannot, I will not let it happen!"

Then he tried to pull himself together:

drank a brandy-and-soda, and walked out to cool his brain, if possible, by the fresh air as he went homewards.

His mind was still in a whirl; but ideas began to shape themselves, and first he thought,—

“Kaufman may win this trial after all.”

This was devoutly to be wished for; but somehow he had a fixed presentiment it would result otherwise. Then again came an idea,—

“If Kaufman is beaten I must secure my money by some means.”

Last of all, after much rumination,—

“I must go in for Geraldine at once; marry her, and settle everything on her before they have time to go at me. They can’t upset an ante-nuptial settlement, so that will save the money; besides, in any case I meant to take her, it will only be necessary to hasten things on.”

And with a lighter heart he found himself near his home; but remembering that his destined bride was to be at Mrs. Alington's dance that night, he concluded to lose no time, but at once hasten to lay more severe siege to her affections. Hailing, therefore, a passing cab, he set off on his enterprise, and soon reached the house where Mrs. Alington's guests were now assembled in overflowing numbers.

Leroy had come to be regarded almost in the light of an acquisition by the generality of hostesses, such a very eligible bachelor was he, and so cleverly had he brought himself forward in the world.

And yet, whatever might be thought of him by the older generation, who had a keen regard to the main chance, there was always something about him that did not quite go down with the younger ones,—a certain stiffness, resulting either from early business habits, or

from natural coldness, which prevented him from ever becoming a favourite.

Young ladies, even in these days, do not marry entirely for convenience ; and though parents might highly approve of Leroy, children could hardly bring themselves to fancy him.

It has often happened so ; and a man who has prided himself throughout all his life as a judge of character and the human race, who has amassed wealth simply by the superiority of his intelligence to that of his fellow-men, finds himself at last utterly at sea, completely mistaken and puzzled in his association with some simple girl.

The fact is, business and business matters afford the very worst standard by which to judge the better sort of womankind. Instinct, and instinct alone, is the true guide by which they can be safely approached ; and if we have so schooled ourselves as to always act by reason

and by rule, we shall have so far deadened the effects of instinct as to go sadly amiss in our love-making.

Thus it was with Leroy. Lady Geraldine Quantock had only seen in him a plain ordinary man, of rather unprepossessing countenance, and some fifteen years older than herself; but she had received him with great courtesy and kindness, inasmuch as he was to be member for Chesterton, and she knew that her father would wish her to do so; besides which, she was an enthusiastic Conservative herself. Leroy could make himself very entertaining, so much did he know of the world; and he was on excellent terms with the family, with whom it was a matter of principle to go in for him thoroughly now that he was the candidate elected to represent the Conservative interest in their borough.

But he himself had been misled by Geraldine's kindness of manner towards him, and the

pleasure she appeared to take in his society, so that he imagined he had made, or was on the verge of making, a conquest.

He quickly discovered her at this dance, and was quite content to discover that he could only get himself put down for two "squares." Leroy had never mastered successfully the art of waltzing, and he had too much sense to attempt—at least among those whose opinion he valued—what he knew he could not do well. He soon found himself with her whom he destined for his own, and to his satisfaction she readily consented to sit out the dance. Then he began,—confident enough, yet still conscious of an inaptitude for his task,—

"I'm afraid I went away rather uncere-
moniously from your house to-night; I can't
think what I was about. I came here on
purpose to apologize to you."

"Indeed, Mr. Leroy," replied she, "we did

think you went away rather abruptly, and feared you were ill."

She had thought of him, therefore ; and as he looked on her with an air almost of appropriation, and marked the rare contour of her figure, and the bright freshness of her well-cut features — for Lady Geraldine was what in these days would be a fashionable beauty — he felt a something stealing over his heart that, by no great stretch of imagination, might be considered at least akin to love.

"Oh, no," he went on, "I wasn't ill. I don't know quite how it happened ; the fact is, I was not myself, and shall not be myself till I've had some talk with you."

"Indeed, Mr. Leroy, I shall be very glad to help you if I can."

She thought he was troubled about electioneering matters.

"Thank you so much for that. You *can* help me very much, Lady Geraldine, for I

love you, as you must have guessed ; and I ask you to become my help-meet—that is, my wife. Say that you will consent, and I shall have nothing more to wish for in this world.”

Now there was something so utterly unexpected in this declaration of affection, and also a savour of ill-breeding in the way Leroy choose at such a moment to play upon the words “help-meet” and “help,” that Lady Geraldine was offended as well as surprised.

“Mr. Leroy,” she said, with much coldness, “I think you forget yourself. I have never given you any grounds for venturing to address me thus. For my part, I shall try to forget that you have ever done so ; and you will understand, that on the smallest shadow of a repetition of this evening’s performance you forfeit my own and my father’s friendship. Will you kindly take me back to my *chaperone* ?”

Leroy did as he was bid, much crest-fallen,

and inwardly ruminating that women are more difficult to understand than the investing public, or even than the wildest of German Jews.

As may be conjectured, he did not stay long at Mrs. Alington's after that, but went home, and passed a sleepless night reflecting on his prospects. It was clear he must marry some one, as the sole method of saving his fortune, in case the worst came to the worst, and Kaufman was defeated in the momentous action ; but he concluded at last, after thinking vainly of possible spouses, that after all he would be foolish to rush into wedlock in this way from mere fear.

“At least,” thought he, “I will wait till this trial is over, and then I shall know for certain one way or the other ; but it may be too late to find a wife then. Stay !—happy thought, by Jove !—I'll make Kate Hamilton marry me if it comes to a pinch. I've got

those letters of hers, and she isn't likely to refuse ; besides, I know old Hamilton is getting hard up, and would jump at the idea. I might do worse too ; she's got £40,000, and a fair position ; I shall take no harm with her. Yes, that will be the plan. Since Geraldine won't have me—more fool she, considering what a settlement I should make—I'll bide the event of this trial, and then, if it be necessary, just marry Kate."

Anxiously did the days and weeks pass while that Kaufman case dragged its weary length along from one court to another. Leroy felt a feverish desire to attend all the time and hear what was going on ; but he knew it might excite suspicion against him if he were seen there, and absolute apparent indifference must be his *rôle*. With what eagerness, however, did he devour all the editions of the papers, whilst he cursed the incompetence of the law-reporters, who so

often contrived to render things unintelligible!

But the end came at last. He was not dismayed or surprised, for his mind had long told him it would be so. The shareholder carried his point against Kaufman, and recovered his money; while the multitude of other shareholders of the same company, who had taken shares on the faith of that prospectus, now rushed in also for their judgments.

One point did not occur to Leroy at the moment, which was, that only original shareholders could make claims of this kind; those who had bought shares from others had no such rights under the Act against the promoters. So in reality the amount of liability was not likely to be so great as he in his fear was anticipating.

There was no time to be lost, he thought. Any moment the torpid intellect of the

public might be further awaking. Immediate marriage was necessary.

That very day Leroy went to call on the Hamiltons: it was at the end of July, and things were getting slow there as elsewhere, excepting for the intended marriage of Kate and Prince Lambertini on the 9th of next month.

Leroy was welcomed kindly enough, though there was a slight idea he had somewhat neglected the family since he had got up in the world, and was now only returning to them because Kate was going to make a good match. As a matter of fact, he had been so profoundly interested in his own affairs he had never discovered that she was engaged to be married at all.

It was with no small surprise, therefore, that he received Mrs. Hamilton's apologies that they had forgotten to send him an invitation for the wedding, and for a moment a

feeling of hopelessness flashed through his mind. But his position was too perilous. Marry he must, and Kate was the only girl of any position that he could secure. The thing must be carried through now.

So he prolonged his call, determined to bring matters to an immediate issue. The opportunity was given him by Mrs. Hamilton going out to superintend dinner arrangements for that night; and he then and there declared to Kate that he had come there, not knowing she was engaged, to ask her to marry him; but that now, when he knew another man was before him, he felt quite determined that she should be his.

“Now, Frank—Mr. Leroy, I should say—don’t be a fool,” said Kate.

“I never was more in earnest in my life. I really wish you to marry me. I am a far better match than Lambertini, and will settle all my money on you.”

“ Really, I don’t know what you mean by talking like this. I am engaged. The invitations for the wedding have gone out. It takes place within a fortnight. You must be joking.”

“ It shall never take place,” rejoined Leroy, firmly ; “ at least not with Lambertini as the husband.”

Kate laughed a half-forced laugh.

“ Now do talk sensibly. What are you going to give me as a wedding present ? ”

“ Myself and my fortune.”

“ Nonsense ; I wouldn’t have you on any consideration.”

“ Listen to me, Kate : it is well to come to the point before your mother comes back. I have some letters of yours, which you may remember writing some years ago. I see you do remember them. Well, you break off this engagement with Lambertini, or I show him those letters. I give you till to-morrow to

decide, and I will then call for your answer. No words now. You are angry, so I shall say good-bye ; but remember, I shall be here for my answer to-morrow."

The reader may be left to speculate on the frame of mind in which Kate now was. She did not love the prince, it is true ; but to be forced into giving him up in this ignominious manner, after everything had been formally announced, was too horrible. Still even that was better than for him to give her up, as she feared he would do if he saw those letters.

Leroy she absolutely hated for his conduct, and felt she would sooner marry any one than him ; but still, what was she to do ? For the first time for many years Kate had a good cry, and went miserable to bed that night.

But it so chanced, His Imperial Highness, Prince Lambertini, was one of the syndicate with which Kaufman was connected. Leroy did not remember this till he got out of the

house. He knew that Lambertini's wealth consisted solely of what he had made in England. Suddenly the thought struck him—"Why, Lambertini will be ruined by this Kaufman business!" and without more ado he drove hastily off to the Prince's abode.

There he introduced himself as Captain Hamilton's solicitor; found the prince careworn, yet courteous; explained that he had called on the delicate business of enquiring whether the rumours were true that the prince was implicated with Kaufman, etc., etc.

To which the prince returned a straightforward answer enough, unsuspecting of guile, saying also that he had been about to write to Captain Hamilton on the subject.

"Well, sir," said Leroy, "I am sure I am deeply grieved; but you will doubtless be aware that it cannot be for the happiness of those concerned that this marriage should take place, and, acting for Captain Hamilton, I must

ask you to publicly announce in the papers the reason why the engagement is broken off."

"Certainly I will do that," said the prince. "It is but right; and you will see Captain Hamilton and Miss Hamilton to-morrow and explain."

"I will; but you may just as well write direct and say what has happened, and what you propose to do; indeed, as I understand it, you were about to do so before I came?"

"Yes, I was; I will add a little to the letters, and send them to-night. I am pained, sir, as a gentleman, to have put Captain and Miss Hamilton in this position; I can say no more. I wish you good-day, sir."

"So, so," thought Leroy, as he went away. "That's fallen out very nicely; for those letters would have hardly sufficed to frighten her into breaking off with the man, and I could not have shown them to him, really.

I must make her consent to-morrow to have me in the prince's place—poor devil ! ”

Kate's first feeling the next day, when the letters from Lambertini arrived, was, that Leroy had really betrayed her already to him, and these were but polite excuses for putting an end to the matter. Then she thought, Leroy could have had no inducement to act till he heard her decision ; and so it gradually dawned on her that this financial failure of the prince had helped her out of a very great difficulty, to a certain extent.

She was relieved, on the one hand, from the necessity of throwing him over ; and on the other from the fear of having those letters shown to him, so as to make him discard her.

But there was still that horrid Leroy wanting to marry her ; how could she get over that ?

The astute gentleman himself had already

made a point of seeing Captain Hamilton on the matter, as he had met him after a Board meeting of the Directors of the National Iron-works Company; and to him he propounded his desire to at once marry Kate, and settle on her £250,000, the interest to be for her sole and separate use, she having the first life estate in it instead of himself — a most unusually magnanimous offer for any man to make.

Captain Hamilton was fairly astounded. Events had crowded on him so thickly, he really felt inclined to gasp for breath. The unexpected intelligence about Lambertini when all was settled for the marriage; and now to find Leroy, who had been apparently almost dropping their acquaintance of late, suddenly coming forward with an offer like this—why, it passed comprehension!

Nevertheless, the captain was quite alive to the fact, that, in his embarrassed position,

such an arrangement was completely desirable, and should be eagerly closed with.

The wedding could take place, only with a different husband, and then with a daughter provided for in such a manner he might well be able to set his own affairs in order.

“My dear Frank,” said he, “this is most kind on your part. You know that I should not, under any circumstances, wish for a better son-in-law than you ; but your proposed settlement is indeed generous ;” and the good gentleman, whose nerves had been pretty well unstrung by the prince’s *fiasco*, was overcome with emotion.

Leroy looked on with a queer expression, half-pity, half-amusement, and then continued, “Well, Captain, since you are so kind as to give me your consent, I must try my luck with Kate, I suppose.”

“Yes, yes. It’s rather sudden for her, isn’t

it ? but she's a good girl, and will see that it is for the best, I hope."

"I hope so, I'm sure," and Leroy left his future father-in-law to seek an interview with the lady.

Kate, meanwhile, who had really not by any means a strong character, despite her considerable knowledge of men and things, had been working herself into quite a fever of hatred and loathing for Leroy. It is likely enough that, if he had ascertained earlier how Lambertini was to retire by force of circumstances, and had therefore never mentioned those old letters, she would not have been disinclined to receive him as a suitor, since she had up to then no particular objection to him.

Now, however, that he had shown his hand, and threatened her in that way, she positively abominated him. That he would call that day she was sure, and her first thought was

to keep out of the way ; but that would only be deferring the evil hour. Best have it out with him quickly. And so she stayed at home, while her mother went down to Blackheath to investigate the truth of certain reports concerning Master Jack's misdemeanours.

Leroy came sure enough, and went straight to the point, for he knew there was nothing to be gained by circumlocution.

“I'm very glad, Kate, that the question of the prince has been settled without further trouble. I am sorry that I had to speak to you as I did yesterday ; but I had no idea then of Lambertini having come to grief. I have spoken to your father this morning, and he is quite willing that you should marry me. I am to settle £250,000 on you for your sole use ; and I now come to ask you if you will have me ?”

Kate looked at him with a miserable, hunted sort of expression.

“What if I refuse?”

“I shall show those letters at the clubs to any one who chooses to read them.”

Now here was rather a weak point in Leroy's attack, for he would certainly have run the risk of suffering greatly in his own reputation had he attempted any such performance as he threatened; and indeed anyone capable of calmly considering the matter would have been sure that he durst not do anything of the kind; but others besides him have been mean enough ere now to utter such threats, and even foolish enough to write them in letters, whence to them have arisen sundry troubles which need not here be detailed. But Kate was terrified at the bare idea.

“Oh! is there no escape?” she cried.
“Do, please, be kind, and not ask me. Why should you want me to marry you when you see I can't bear the idea?”

“I must own,” replied he, “that I should

not press you so, but that it is an important matter of convenience to me to be married quickly."

"But why to me? why to me?"

"Because I know of no one else whom I could get soon enough."

"Oh, there must be some one! Try, do try."

"I have tried. There is no one else whom I can marry forthwith—at least, no one of suitable position."

Kate burst into tears.

"Oh, it is too cruel! I cannot marry you. The idea is too horrible."

"Now listen to me, Kate. I don't want to be cruel, or anything of that kind; but married I must be, so as to settle this money. For the rest, Kate, I may tell you that this settlement will enable you to help your father out of his difficulties. You do not know it, but he *is* in desperate difficulties, and but for this will be

ruined. You are fond of him I know ; do this to save him. He is himself too proud and too kind to press you ; but he is awfully anxious to hear what you say. I don't ask you to love me, or any nonsense of that kind. I don't profess to love you. I look upon it as purely a matter of business. Marry me, let me control the income, and then live as you like and where you like ; don't fear that I shall ever make you unhappy."

She was silent for a while, and Leroy let her think the matter over. Presently she said,

"Tell me, do you want to settle this money because you are afraid you will lose it ?"

He nodded assent.

"Some people have a claim upon you that this settlement will defeat ?"

"That is so."

"But if it were known that you and I had arranged to get married just to prevent these

people getting their money, would the settlement hold good ? ”

“ No, not if it could be clearly shown ; but who could show it except ourselves ? ”

“ That’s just what I wanted to arrive at.”

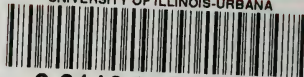
Kate was getting quite self-possessed now ; and the idea of helping her father, whom, when she was fairly roused, she dearly loved, just turned the scale in favour of Leroy. Besides, there was perhaps a shade of a thought that it would be some little triumph when her friends were talking how her projected marriage had fallen through, to show that she had a man like Leroy ready to come forward at a moment’s notice.

“ Only I must have him in my power,” she said to herself. “ He would lead me a wretched life unless I get some hold over him. If I am really to have the money in my own right, I shall always be able to keep him in subjection.” So she continued aloud : “ You have





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